UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA DE MADRID

FACULTAD DE FILOSOFÍA Y LETRAS

Departamento de Lingüística, Lenguas Modernas, Lógica y Filosofía de la Ciencia y

Teoría de la Literatura y Literatura Comparada

THE TERRORIST FIGURE IN 9/11 FICTION:

MISREPRESENTING MUSLIMS, ARABS AND MIDDLE EASTERNERS

MEMORIA PARA OPTAR AL GRADO DE DOCTOR

PRESENTADA POR

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Bajo la dirección de la doctora:

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Madrid, Octubre 2010

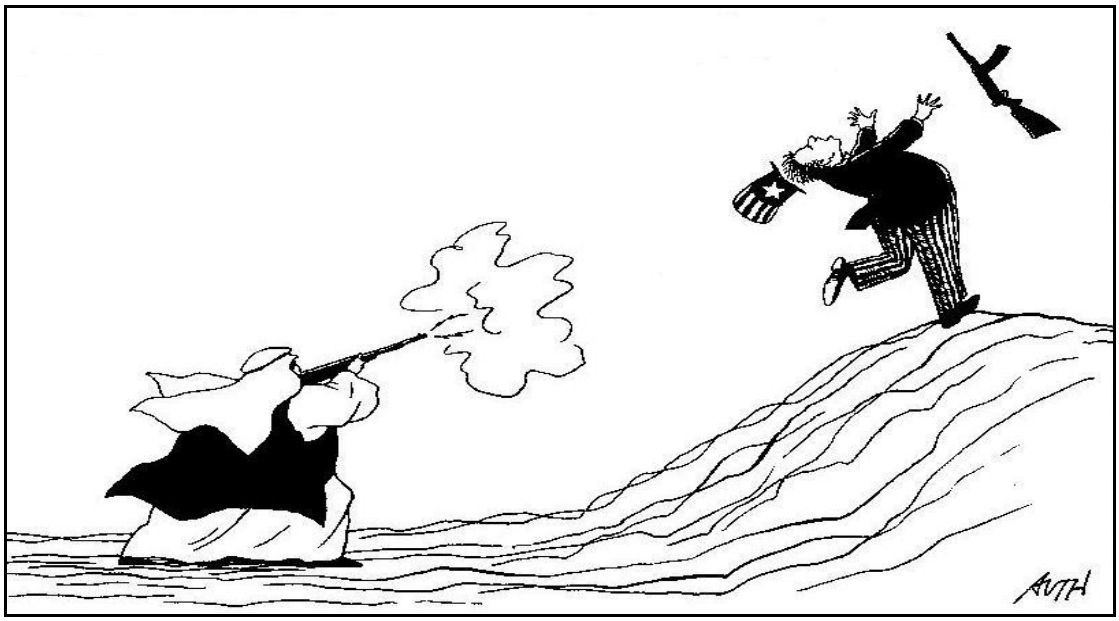

Figure i. Tony Auth, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 2002.

A mi madre,
Tote Bermúdez de Castro.
Por su ejemplo de vida en la entrega.

The literary text is a time- and place-bound verbal construction that is always in one way or another political. Because it is inevitably involved with one or more discourses or an ideology it cannot help being a vehicle for power. As a consequence, and just like any other text, literature does not simply reflect relations of power, but actively participates in the consolidation and/or construction of discourses and ideologies, just as functions as an instrument in the construction of identities, not only at the individual level – that of the subject – but also on the level of the group or even that of the national state. Literature is not simply a product of history, it also actively makes history.

– Hans Bertens, On New Historicism and Cultural Materialism, in *Literary Theory* (2004)

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Acknowledgments

When on September 11, 2001, I watched perplexed, as everybody else, the terrorist attacks on TV, I could not imagine that in the lapse of a few years I would end up devoting my professional – and personal – life to writing about it and its disastrous consequences. After spending the academic year 2003-04 with a scholarship at Royal Holloway University in London, it was the reading of Don DeLillo's *Libra* back in Madrid – a novel about JFK's murder yet under the perspective of Oswald – what planted on me the seeds of a voracious curiosity on the infinite possibilities of fiction when narrating political violence. I would like to thank the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid in general for expanding my horizons by giving me the opportunity to transform my personal interests into an academic project, and for turning me into the incoming scholar that I am today. I am especially grateful to those professors who, in their respective fields, illuminated me on how to approach the topic of this dissertation: Amaya Mendikoetxea in Linguistics, Amelia Fernández in Discourse Analysis, Belén Piqueras in Postmodernism, Carmen de la Guardia in History of the US, and particularly María Lozano in North American Literature, who was my tutor of both my MA thesis on Kennedy's murder and this PhD thesis on 9/11, and who has wisely – and motherly – guided and supported me for the last six years.

I would like to thank Lourdes Rey for helping me with all the necessary bureaucracy to get the scholarship that changed my life by allowing me to do research at New York University for two years. In New York, Richard Bueno, the Academic Director of Cervantes Institute, trusted on me and was the best boss one can dream while I worked as a teacher for them. My stay in the US would have not been the same without the support of Barbara Egan, my American mother. At New York

University, I am especially grateful to professors Marita Sturken and Crystal Parikh for their interest in this project and their inspired advice. Indeed, I am indebted to New York City as a whole, because my splendid experience there was fundamental in the process of reinventing myself, intellectually speaking.

Finally, I am enormously grateful to my friends and family, who provided significant encouragement and help to keep me grounded and sane through the demanding and rewarding process of writing this dissertation, including Esther Toledano, Lara Ortega, Ada Francoy, Patxi López-Barberá, Gema Blanco, and especially Víctor Márquez and my mother, Tote Bermúdez de Castro. Thank you all for reminding me of who I am.

Abstract

There is a discursive way of coming to terms with the terrorists responsible for the attacks of September 11, 2001, which has emerged as the predominant course of action in the US. This mode of discourse is supported by governmental institutions, the mainstream media, and especially by those who have re-visited and re-created the event through fiction, that is, novelists, film directors, TV scriptwriters, cartoonists, etc. It can appear in different guises, the most common one being those *demonizing discourses* in which the 9/11 terrorists are presented as the quintessentially "evil" personification of irrationality and hatred. These representations of the terrorists give space to another much more dangerous rhetoric: those *generalizing discourses* in which a new identity label that emerged after 9/11 – a religious, racial, and ethnic mix merely based on physical appearance and conformed by Muslims, Arabs, Middle Easterners, and whoever looks like Muslim, Arab, or from the Middle East – becomes the constructed object of both suspicion and retaliation. Moreover, certain *"hystoerical" contextualizations* of the event have taken place, which, obsessed with memorializing the 9/11 date, reformulated contemporary history in Dickensonian terms like "everything has changed, nothing has changed" while neglecting to specify "for whom" it has changed, and more importantly, "for whom it has not." This project analyzes how some US 9/11 fictional works – novels, films, TV series, short stories, and comics – have rewritten the historic event of 9/11 under these ideological limitations.

Introduction

> For indeed, if the content of history can be manipulated by mass media, if television and newspapers can falsify or justify historical facts, then the unequivocal relation between the real and the imaginary disappears … Consequently, historical events must be doubted, reviewed, reexamined, especially recent events as presented, or rather RE-presented to us by mass-media and by fiction.
>
> – Raymond Federman, *Critifiction: Postmodern Essays* (1993)

In the lecture series "*Il faut défendre la société*" given at the Collège de France during the course 1975-76, Michel Foucault focused on what he called *le discours historico-politique*: a type of discourse that employs historical arguments originally race-based to support pre-determined political goals (Foucault, 1976, p. 43-64). Foucault provided several examples of this kind of discourse, like those racist biologists and scientists whose "historical" argumentations led to the popular naturalization of the state racism deployed by the Nazi regime. Foucault argued that any discourse, not only this *historico-politique* one, is not tied to a particular subject or discipline that defines it; on the contrary, according to Foucault, it is the subject and the discipline which are constructed through it.

Nowadays, after the post-structuralist revolution and the insights in the field of cultural history, the hypothesis that history is not only written by historians does not appear to us so new. Many public actors employ historical discourses that are in fact influenced by their respective mechanisms of discursive production. Some examples are the news media, which firstly cover and narrate historical events usually selecting them in attention to their spectacular condition; or those members of the academia who approach and contextualize historical episodes according to their own political agendas. Among the new ideological state apparatuses in the Althusserian sense, it is the entertainment mass media which, re-visiting and re-writing history through fiction, promote in each case a certain ideological stand, usually the dominant one,

and that which most permanently stays in the popular mind and the collective imagination. The intention of this research is to scrutinize certain biased and hegemony-perpetuating twenty-first century versions of that *discours historico-politique* described by Foucault: I will focus my analysis on those popular and westernist-biased narratives which reconstruct and rewrite in fiction the historical event of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

As the principal object of my study is 9/11 fictional narrative texts, it is important to clarify here what is understood in this project by the terms *fiction*, *narrative*, and *text*, above all when such conflictive terms have been used so often that they lead a life of their own and are almost understood differently by every user. Attempting to provide a definition of each of them could perfectly be the material for a whole research in each case, and it is not my intention to open here a metaphysical debate on so over-commented and slippery terms such as *truth*, *reality*, or *veracity*.[1] In order to clarify the criteria followed to configure the corpus of 9/11 works discussed here, let us assume that, by selecting "fictional" pieces, it is meant that the material chosen is formed by works of the "imagination" whose content could not be discarded on the basis of "not being real" in the classical sense. They are "narratives" meaning that a story is constructed through a sequence of events in each case, and such story-telling process is the principal motivation which characterizes them. Therefore, although there are several 9/11 poems, songs, and plays, and many of them are narrative indeed, they will not be addressed here – yet I am sure their analysis would

[1] On these topics and their conflictive *liaison* to history and fiction see White (1973), Certau (1975), Ricoeur (1983), LaCapra (1985), Toews (1987), and Chartier (1998). More specifically, on the inadequacy of considering the concepts of *truth* and *reality* as quintessentially exclusive of the historical discourse at the expense of fictional practices, I already wrote something in "*Discurso histórico y/como discurso narrativo: Análisis comparativo"* (2006).

provide an interesting complement to this research –.[2] Consequently, my study approaches five fictional narrative modes: those novels, short stories, comics, films, and TV series that share a principal interest in responding to the events of September 11, 2001, through fiction, and which will be considered as primary sources of this research.

On the concept of "text" employed, this project understands it in a broad sense as it becomes clear by the corpus of works selected. In a more ontological level, texts will be considered in the Foucauldian way as battlefields of multiple forces, always time-and-space tied constructions and in one way or another political. Much more when they are historical recreations as it is the case, they are inevitably engaged with ideological positions they cannot help being a vehicle for.

Considering that fiction does not only reflect relations of power but it actively participates in the creation of history and in the consolidation of certain ideological messages, a formulation of the question that originated this research could be: What ideological stances are assumed and perpetuated by these 9/11 fictional works? From the concepts of *ideology* and *hegemony* as used respectively by Louis Althusser in *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses* (1970) and Antonio Gramsci in *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (1971), the hypothesis argued here is that most of these 9/11 Western fictions act as another ideological state apparatus and impose versions of 9/11 which encourage the cultural hegemony of certain groups – principally white heterosexual males – and nations – mostly the United States and Western Europe – over the rest of races, genders, countries and communities. Through the discursive analysis and scrutiny of the narratological strategies deployed by these 9/11 fictional works, I will try to prove in this research how most 9/11

[2] For further research, see in Appendix A the sections that include a list of 9/11 plays and anthologies of 9/11 poems, respectively.

fictions are an active agent of acquiescence in the process of re-writing the historical event of 9/11 in concordance with biased and bigoted dominant interests.

Among all the possible elements inside these 9/11 fictions which could be studied – i.e. the heroization of the 9/11 victims, the dichotomical representation of the media which either over-exhibited the event or censored parts of it at convenience, the supporting depiction of U.S. Government's re(tali)action to the attacks… – I have specifically focused my analysis on how the quintessential "other" protagonists of the attacks, that is, the perpetrators, have been represented or rather misrepresented – mostly unrepresented – by these 9/11 fictional accounts. This choice serves to two different methodological purposes: make the analysis even more precise and detailed by focusing it on those whose human condition is usually questioned within most of these 9/11 fictional narratives; and encourage incoming scholars to explore other issues like those mentioned above in which historical, ideological and fictional discourses interact to one another while configuring the corpus of 9/11 fiction.

Considering that the 9/11 terrorists, or more concretely how they are fictionally conveyed is the principal object of analysis of this research, I have deemed appropriate to introduce the topic by briefly tracing how *terror* and those who exercise political violence have been traditionally represented by authors of fictions long before 9/11. Therefore, Part I "The Current State of Affairs" starts with the retrospective study "Plotting Terror: The Terrorist in Fiction before 9/11," which addresses both the controversial term of *terrorist* – an epithet always attributed, as those who exert "terror" do not regard themselves as terrorists – and the polemical relationship throughout the last two centuries between the violent agent and the revolutionary artist, both sharing an interest in shattering the established order yet through different media. Works like Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads* (1800), Conrad's

The Secret Agent (1909), and Lessing's *The Good Terrorist* (1985) among many others will be approached in this first chapter that serves as an introductory, historical route around literary terrorism, and which will show how the terrorist phenomenon has been so differently conceived and articulated by a myriad of artistic movements spanning from Romanticism through Modernism to Postmodernism.

The subsequent Chapter Two "The Academia on 9/11 Fiction" explores some critical studies carried out by the academia on the specific field of 9/11 fiction. It will be shown here how most of these previous analyses are restricted to a particular medium or genre – i.e. comics and 9/11, 9/11 novels –, prioritizing therefore the particular medium or genre in which these 9/11 fictional products are presented over the similarity of messages conveyed by works from different narrative disciplines with resembling discursive strategies. Such absence of ideological analyses regarding these 9/11 historical fictions seems to me unfortunate and surprising, moreover considering the high amount of literary and cultural theory existent today addressing the intertwined and mutually constitutive disciplines of history, literature and ideology. Therefore, the findings of the Frankfurt School and the more recent ones by intellectual historians, new historicists and especially cultural materialists in this respect will permeate the body of this project as a permanent theoretical presence while analyzing the ways 9/11 popular fictions do actually reconstruct the event.

Considering some ill-fated consequences of the events occurred on 9/11 like the so-called War on Terror, it is very important to clearly identify those who were the actual perpetrators of such 9/11 attacks, above all when certain bigoted generalizations have taken place. On September 11, 2001, nineteen men hijacked and crashed four passenger planes, three of them against crowded buildings in the United States. These men were terrorists, not state-sponsored ones but part of the terrorist

organization al-Qaeda led by Osama bin Laden among others. Fifteen were Saudi Arabians, two from the United Arab Emirates, one Lebanese and one Egyptian – not a single one was from either Afghanistan or Iraq. These men were also religious fundamentalists, in its Islamic version.

Amnesty International confirmed that in the immediate week following 9/11 there were at least 540 reported attacks on Arab Americans in the United States – compared with a total of 600 in 2001 –, dozens of mosques were vandalized, and there were also more than 200 reported attacks on Sikhs, citizens of Indian descent who practice Sikhism and wear turbans and beards because of their creed (Amnesty International, 2001, p. 11).

What is the connection between these two groups of events? How do the former acts of violence lead to the latter? In most of the cases, it turns to be a wrong generalization assumed by part of the population: from terrorists and fundamentalists to Muslims, Arabs, Middle Easterners and whoever looks like Muslim, Arab or from the Middle East.

Such dangerous and erroneous social synecdoche – considering one portion as the whole – is ubiquitous within US 9/11 fictions. The representation of terrorists and fundamentalists within the corpus of Western novels, films, TV series, short stories and comics dealing with the events of September 11, 2001 is minimal, and in the few instances these individuals are represented, it is mostly to convey anti-Muslim or anti-Arab rhetorics. Sherman and Nardin, in *Terror, Culture, Politics: Rethinking 9/11* (2006) point to this fact when they remark that “there is a market for popular novels and movies” which rather than investigate on the attacks’ direct causes, it is oriented “toward an imaginary enemy that is “evil” because it opposes American ideals of individualism, devotion to family, patriotism and self-sacrifice” (Sherman and Nardin,

2006, p. 5). As we will see, the mainstream discursive line of these historical (re)creations of the 9/11 events does not but simplistically depict the terrorists responsible for the attacks by attributing them quintessential "evil" features in various ways, serving the narratives as excuse to perpetuate racial, religious and cultural stereotypes and prejudices against Arabs, Muslims and Middle Easterners. It will also be observed how some stereotypes regarding the terrorists depicted inside these 9/11 fictions do actually coincide with certain reductive and belligerent images and false ideological dichotomies – good vs. evil, either with us or against us – employed by President George W. Bush in his world-widely forecast post-9/11 public discourses.

After the introductory Part I, the body of the project itself is divided into three different parts according to the specific narratological strategies followed by each group of authors when depicting the terrorists. Part II "Minimal Portraits" approaches those 9/11 fictions in which the 9/11 terrorists are not configured as full characters but just as mere shadowy presences mostly commented by other characters. The first narratives addressed in this section are those totalizing fictions which (re)create under the victims' perspective the events both inside the Twin Towers and aboard the planes hijacked, like Rubran Fernández's novel *September 11 from the Inside* (2003) and Frank Senauth's novel *A Day of Terror* (2002). It will become evident in this third chapter how the 9/11 terrorists who minimally appear in both novels are portrayed from westernist positions, and their motivations to perpetrate the attacks are completely attributed from both authors' respective cultural backgrounds and ideological visions. Chapter Four will pay a special attention to those popular "plain" narratives which only approached the events happened abroad the hijacked flight United Airlines 93: Paul Greengrass's film *United 93* (2006), Peter Markle's Fox TV series *Flight 93* (2006), and Paul Chadwick's comic "Sacrifice" (2002). It was widely

reported by the news media how the passengers and crew of this particular flight did confront the hijackers and almost took control of the flight. This study will show how the three fictional narratives referred above that revisited the events aboard this particular plane will serve, yet in different ways, the principal purpose of heroizing the Flight 93 victims and crew presenting their courage, humanity and "goodness" in clear contrast with the demonized "evil" terrorists.

Chapter Five addresses Don DeLillo's novel *Falling Man* (2007), in which one of the 9/11 terrorists breaks minimally – and disappointingly – through just a few lines, more like a ghost rather than a character. DeLillo's 9/11 work will also be studied in this chapter in contrastive analysis with his former full-time commitment with the representation of terrorism and political violence in fiction throughout his entire career, as in his preceding works *Players* (1977), *Libra* (1988), and *Mao II* (1991) among others. Part I concludes with the analysis in Chapter Six of Aaron Sorkin's *The West Wing* special episode "Isaac and Ishmael" (2001), aired a week after the 9/11 attacks, and in which the characters of the popular series indoctrinate the audience on how to be a docile patriot when the fictional White House depicted in the series faces a terrorist threat.

Part III "Terrorists in America" deals with those fictional 9/11 works in which the terrorists are now presented as co-protagonists or even narrators of the stories in which they appear. This narratological device points to "supposedly" allowing the reader to have access to, on the one hand, fictionalized versions of the 9/11 terrorists' minds, and secondly, a myriad of other characters' perspectives to which the terrorists' perceptions are contrasted. However, most of the 9/11 fictions which approach the terrorists in such a manner do in fact offer the one-dimensional view of their respective authors who, abusing infinite possibilities of fiction to introduce the

readers into the terrorists' dreams and thoughts, perpetuate in their 9/11 works their own westernist political agendas. All the snapshots of American ordinary life depicted in these fictions underlie how admirable the American system is, how good-hearted and courageous its population, and invoke, in one way or another, the re-emergence of American patriotism in its most dangerous, imperialistic and warmongering version. While positing the vacuous and not at all innocent question of "Why do they hate us?," and redefining the United Sates as a nation of male strong heroes which does not only "deserve" to prevail but "will" prevail, these 9/11 works behave as twenty-first century reenactments of the expansionist manifest destiny rhetoric. The specific four 9/11 fictional pieces that will be analyzed in this section in Chapters Seven, Eight, Nine, and Ten, respectively are John Updike's novel *Terrorist* (2006), Martin Amis's short story "The Last Days of Muhammad Atta" (2006), Andre Dubus III's novel *The Garden of Last Days* (2008), and Stan Lee's comic *The Sleeping Giant* (2002). It will be observed how these four narratives are turned into the perfect occasion for their authors to deliberately display their own political and racially prejudiced opinions in the guise of fiction.

Part IV "Terrorists in "Hystoerical" Context" approaches those 9/11 writers are cartoonists whose main narratological strategy consists in (ab)using the powerful weapon of history as argumentative mechanism – argument *ad historiam* – when supposedly contextualizing – rather decontextualizing – the 9/11 event into conveniently selective historical discourses to expose their authors' respective warmongering viewpoints through fictional narratives. The resulting – and discouraging – 9/11 accounts basically follow the theoretical lines opened by conservative thinkers like Bernard Lewis and his notorious "The Roots of Muslim Rage" (1990), or Samuel P. Huntington and his pessimistic "Clash of Civilizations"

theory (1992), in which he forecasts a dark future dominated by confronting civilizations while concluding that the "white" West must be alert and start defending itself from Arab and Chinese peoples. The four 9/11 fictional works approached in this section in Chapters Eleven, Twelve, Thirteen and Fourteen, respectively, are Sid Jacobson and Ernie Colon's graphic adaptation of the official *9/11 Report* (2006), David Swanner's novel *The Fateful Cause* (2005), Beau Smith's comic "Soldiers" (2002), and Sam Glanzman's comic "There were Tears in Her Eyes" (2002). In these works it will be possible to find the 9/11 terrorists compared with Nazis – the Nazis resulting more honorable in the simile – and even with 15th century Romanian Prince Vlad the Impaler, upon which the literary figure of Dracula was inspired. Some of the 9/11 works analyzed here also and very graphically relate the 9/11 victims with those of Pearl Harbor and even the Holocaust, while the causes behind the 9/11 events are traced back to biblical disputes. Little mention is made within these "historical" works to the definite history of European and American involvement in the Middle East at all levels – political, military, economic, cultural, in brief, colonial and imperialistic – or to more recent and specific United States foreign policies like support for Israel in the Palestinian conflict.

Through this research project, I intend to denounce the overspread diffusion of certain generalizations regarding the 9/11 terrorists committed by Western fictions which, in support of the other established ideological apparatuses like the Bush Administration and the mass media, abused the idea of "special" circumstances – "everything has changed" as its principal motto – to actively cooperate in the justification of "special" racially-based policies directed towards Muslims, Arabs, Middle Easterners, and whoever look likes Muslim, Arab or from the Middle East. These officially justified practices, which included racial profiling, strip-searching,

indefinite detentions, and even torture both in the US and abroad in detention camps, clearly contradict the most basic civil liberties and human rights. As it is the purpose of this project to offer some resistance to the perpetuation of such mainstream misguided representations of Muslims and Arabs by the national fiction, I will dedicate the Conclusion "How to Resist Demonizing and Generalizing Discourses" to the analysis of how some very few independent works and authors were able to escape that main line of misrepresentation, opening new perspectives to make the reader/spectator reflect on the 9/11 event and its consequences rather than consume it.

Regarding the working methodology developed all along this research, I would like to recall that my principal tool consists in carrying out narratological analyses of some 9/11 fictional works while fully relating them to the historical circumstances and production contexts in which they were written or directed. Therefore, the project offers a comparative study of how different fictional works inspired in the events of September 11, 2001, deploy narrative devices to (re)tell a (his)story, and how through those sometimes masked narrative mechanisms, certain ideological stances invite/incite the audience to comprehend the 9/11 events in a particular, conveniently patriotic and jingoistic way. The analysis of the figure of the narrator is crucial when identifying how the rewriting of the historical event conducts the reader/spectator towards a particular vision of the 9/11 events. More concretely, my analysis in each work of the figure of the "focalizor" or narrator and of the act of focalization *per se* is indebted to how it was originally examined by Mikhail Bakhtin in "Discourse and the novel" (1981; written originally in 1934-35), by Gérard Gennete in "*Discours du récit*" (1972), and more recently by Mieke Bal in *Narratology* (1997). Equally significant to the theoretical frame in which this project is firmly grounded are the founding works in the field of post-colonial theory by

Edward Said like *Orientalism* (1978) or his most recent *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), as well as the illuminating insights by Raymond Williams, Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield in *Problems is Materialism and Culture* (1980) and *Political Shakespeare* (1985) respectively, to which it is indebted the cultural materialist approach adopted throughout the entire project towards the 9/11 works.

In order to facilitate other incoming scholars' approach to the analysis of this twenty-first century subgenre constituted by 9/11 works, I have substituted the traditional bibliography for a more comprehensive set of three appendixes plus a list of works consulted while carrying out this research. Appendix A "9/11 Fiction" includes those 9/11 fictional works that I have accessed to, classified by the respective generic formats in which they were originally presented, that is, 9/11 Cartoons/Comics/Graphic Novels, 9/11 Films, 9/11 Novels, 9/11 Performances/Plays, 9/11 Poetry Recollections, 9/11 Short Stories and 9/11 TV Movies/Series/Docudramas. Appendix B "9/11 Non-Fiction" contains those theoretical works which approach the 9/11 event and its consequences from different disciplines, yet from the vast 9/11 non-fictional production, by large much more extensive than its fictional counterpart, I have only included here those works which I have directly used in the discussion of the selected 9/11 fictions addressed in the project. Appendix C "On 9/11 Fiction" includes those few former academic studies on the topic of 9/11 fiction as well as those newspaper articles which reviewed as independent pieces some of the 9/11 fictions analyzed in this project. Finally, the last section "Works Consulted" includes those examined works to which this research is theoretically indebted and to which I am enormously grateful.

To conclude this introduction, I just would like to underline the intrinsically interdisciplinary nature of this project: it can be considered a historiographical

research as it analyzes how the September 11, 2001, historical event has been narrated and (re)constructed; it can also be regarded a literary and film case study as the object of analysis is precisely that corpus of novels, films, TV series, short stories, and comics which re-visit and re-write the specific 9/11 historical episode; it can also be considered an applied study on narratology, as the approach to the 9/11 topic and the tools and methodology employed all along the research are principally narratological analyses; the project also ascribes itself to the field of mass media analysis, as it evaluates how a massive broadcast event has been conveyed by the entertainment media; the investigation can also be included within the domains of literary theory, as it is firmly grounded on the new historicists', intellectual historians' and especially cultural materialists' challenging approaches to history and literature, as well as it endorses post-colonial interests on how Arabs, Muslims and Middle Easterners are (mis)represented by Western contemporary fictions; and finally, the research can perfectly be framed within the new cultural history field, as it basically intends to reveal and denounce certain ideological stances perpetuated by fictional pieces in their reconstruction of the events of September 11, 2001.

PART I

THE CURRENT STATE OF AFFAIRS

> There's a curious knot that binds novelists and terrorists… Years ago I used to think it was possible for a novelist to alter the inner life of the culture. Now bomb-makers and gunmen have taken that territory.
>
> – Don DeLillo, *Mao II* (1992)

Figure ii. Jeff MacNelly, *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 1979.

Part I

The Current State of Affairs

Before approaching how the figure of the 9/11 terrorist has been represented by fiction, it seems mandatory to briefly introduce different current definitions of the controversial term of “terrorism”, as well as the intricacies of the sometimes polemical relationship among political violence, fiction and how the former has traditionally been conveyed by the latter. Chapter One “Plotting Terror: The Terrorist in Fiction before 9/11” focuses on how political terror and violence have been addressed by nineteenth and twentieth century authors of fictional works, especially by those whose writing commitment with shattering the world’s order resembled to some respect the ideals defended by anarchists and political extremists of their time. It also seems equally important to provide full account of what has been said on the specific subgenre of 9/11 fiction. Therefore, Chapter Two “The Academia on 9/11 Fiction” explores how fictions inspired on the events of September 11, 2001, have been “minimally” inspected by scholars, and in the few cases they were addressed, they were usually regarded as “passive” products to be analyzed by categories – novels, films, plays… – rather than been remarked their capacity to actively transform the ways the real 9/11 events are actually conceived independently of the particular medium in which such stories are presented.

Chapter 1

Plotting Terror: The Terrorist in Fiction before 9/11

Let us start this dissertation by approaching an issue that has generated a great deal of debate among policy makers and academics from a myriad of disciplines. Considering that the fictional representation of the 9/11 terrorists will be the object of study throughout this entire research, it would be inexcusable not to introduce first the thorny question of what is understood by the concept of *terrorism*. Indeed, the term terrorism is highly controversial: firstly, because it is an attributed term, as those who practice it rarely identify themselves as terrorists, and typically use other appellations like freedom fighters, separatists, liberators, revolutionaries, vigilantes, militants, paramilitaries, guerrilla patrols or rebels – In this respect, it is remarkable how the idea of *freedom* is so easily tied to manipulations on the part of those so-called terrorists, but also by those who receive/observe this form of political violence and argue that it is their own "freedom" what the terrorists can't stand. This self-centered argumentative reduction of the terrorist matter to their "free" personas on the part of the victims and especially the audience considerably reduces any possible understanding on their part of the actual causes behind such acts of terror –. Moreover, the conflicting question of defining a *terrorist* gets even more obscure when those who apply such label to designate others do not actually agree on its scope and meaning, nor there is international agreement on the required conditions for a group or individual to be considered as terrorists.

Abridging the question to its simplest form, it could be stated that terrorism refers to the systematic use of *terror* as a means of *coercion*. However, the lines which demarcate this coercive terror get blurred when some definitions include that such acts of violence are "unlawful" in supposed contrast to similar actions yet carried

out (lawfully?) during wars or by nation states. In fact, the term terrorism is so difficult to define because it is often used by states to delegitimize political or foreign opponents and potentially legitimize the state's own use of terror against those so-called terrorists. The minimal agreement regarding the term terrorism is precisely found on its pejorative use, as it is confirmed by Hoffman in the initial chapter "Defining Terrorism" of his *Inside Terrorism* (1999),[3] when he states that "On one point, at least, everyone agrees: terrorism is a pejorative term. It is a word with intrinsically negative connotations that is generally applied to one's enemies and opponents" (Hoffman, 1999, p. 23). It is also remarkable how some groups and activists involved in independence processes have been called "terrorists" by Western governments and media, and how later, these same public figures now as leaders of independent nations, are called "statesmen" by the same Western public apparatuses. Two examples of this phenomenon are both Nobel Peace Prize laureates Menachem Begin and Nelson Mandela.

The official definition of terrorism valid in the United States that is included in the U.S. Code and Army manuals is the following:

> [An] act of terrorism, means any activity that (A) involves a violent act or an act dangerous to human life that is a violation of the criminal laws of the United States or any State, or that would be a criminal violation if committed within the jurisdiction of the United States or of any State; and (B) appears to be intended (i) to intimidate or coerce a civilian population; (ii) to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion; or (iii) to affect the conduct of a government by assassination or kidnapping. (*US Code* 1984: 2.3077)

However, as Noam Chomsky remarks in his close reading of such official definition, when these very same acts are exercised by a powerful nation state with a much more powerful and organized army, they ceased to be referred as terrorism and become to

[3] Bruce Hoffman is an expert in the study of terrorism and counter-insurgency. He was Director of the RAND (Research and Development) Corporation's Washington Office for eight years. He is Professor of Security Studies at Georgetown University.

be euphemistically alluded as “coercive diplomacy” in the public discourse (Chomsky, 2001, p. 16).

On the other side of the spectrum, one of the most complete definitions of terrorism that I have found was provided by the renowned Dutch scholars Schmidt and Jongman.[4] In their referential work *Political Terrorism* (1988), they propose the following definition:

> Terrorism is an anxiety-inspiring method of repeated violent action, employed by (semi-) clandestine individual, group or state actors, for idiosyncratic, criminal or political reasons, whereby - in contrast to assassination - the direct targets of violence are not the main targets. The immediate human victims of violence are generally chosen randomly (targets of opportunity) or selectively (representative or symbolic targets) from a target population, and serve as message generators. Threat- and violence-based communication processes between terrorist (organization), (imperiled) victims, and main targets are used to manipulate the main target (audience(s)), turning it into a target of terror, a target of demands, or a target of attention, depending on whether intimidation, coercion, or propaganda is primarily sought. (p. 189)

The principal asset of this exhaustive and all-inclusive definition is that it is more focused on terrorist methodology and the fundamental communicative nature of terrorist acts rather than on who exerts such violent methods. Unfortunately, as Horgan underlines in *The Psychology of Terrorism* (2005),[5] such complete definition provided above results a very “academic one, and some would suggest an unpopular one with governments” (Horgan, 2005, p. 21).

More interesting aspects regarding the essence of terrorism are revealed by looking back to the origins of the term. *Terror* comes from its homonym Latin word meaning “to frighten”, and it was firstly used in the expression *terror cimbricus*, which was a panic and state of emergency that ancient Rome suffered when it was

[4] Alex P. Schmidt is Chairman in International Relations at St. Andrews University and Director of its Center for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence. He is also former Officer-in-Charge of the Terrorist Prevention Branch of the United Nations. Albert J. Jongman is Coordinator of the PIOMM (*Programma voor Interdisciplinair Onderzoek naar Oorzaken van Mensenrechtenschendingen* “Interdisciplinary Research Program on Causes of Human Rights Violations”) at Leiden University.
[5] John Horgan is Director of the International Center for the Study of Terrorism at the Pennsylvania State University.

attacked by warriors of the Cimbri tribe around 105 BC. This precedent was cited by the Jacobins when they imposed the "Reign of Terror" during the French Revolution, a moment in which we can situate the actual origin of terrorism as we virtually know it today, that is, as an "–ism" of systematic violence supposedly exercised following a philosophical or political idea. In *Holy Terror* (2005), the reputed British literary theorist Terry Eagleton underlines how the term's emergence within the French Revolution context points to the fact that terrorism and the modern democratic state are intrinsically intertwined as being product of the same historical circumstances. Moreover, it is remarkable how terrorism began life as state terrorism exercised by Robespierre and his party, the leading faction on power in France during that agitated period. As Eagleton puts out: "It was a violence visited by the state on its enemies, not a strike against sovereignty by its faceless foes" (Eagleton, 2005, p. 1).

More related to this project's interest on fictional works, it is noteworthy how the relationship between the terrorist figure and the revolutionary artist can also be traced back to the very birth of this violent phenomenon. It was in 1796 when it is generally accepted that the Irish politician Edmund Burke coined the word *terrorist* in English language when he denounced the Jacobins for letting "thousands of those hell-hounds called terrorists… loose on the people" of France (Burke, 1999, p. 371). Not very far from that date is when both literary critics Lentricchia and McAuliffe situate the starting point of "literary terrorism" when they designate Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads* (1800) as the initial station of their excellent analysis of how political criminals and avant-garde artists, by sharing romantic/delirious visions for shattering the Western established order, have interested each other in the last two centuries.

According to Lentricchia and McAuliffe's *Crimes of Art + Fiction* (2003), "The disturbing adjacency of literary creativity with violence and even political terror

is an inheritance of a romantic extremity whose force is still felt" (Lentricchia and McAuliffe, 2003, p. 2). As a current example of that legacy of shared transgressing "ideals" by artists and political criminals, Lentricchia and McAuliffe refer the scandal provoked by the composer Karlheinz Stockhausen's misunderstood reference in a press conference in Hamburg on September 16, 2001, when he claimed that the destruction of the World Trade Center was "the greatest work of art" (Stockhausen, 2001, p. 76). The public reprobation of the line was immediate. As Anthony Tommasini reported in the *New York Times* when tracing back Stockhausen's polemical affair, after Stockhausen's remark, his concerts were abruptly cancelled and he was condemned by his colleagues and even his family – the composer György Ligeti suggested that Mr. Stockhausen should "be confined to a psychiatric clinic," and Stockhausen's pianist daughter claimed that she would no longer appear under the name Stockhausen (Tommasini, 2001) –. However, both Tommasini in his *New York Times* column and Lentricchia and McAuliffe in their research analyzed Stockhausen's quote in context clarifying what he had actually attempted to refer to: Stockhausen had just tried to express his purest "artistic" envy for the stream of emotions provoked by the spectacular images of 9/11, "a hundredth part of those conflictive sentiments he would have dreamed to evoke himself to the audience" in any of his compositions and concerts (Lentricchia and McAuliffe, 2003, p. 6-13).

The Stockhausen affair serves to Lentricchia and McAuliffe as inspiration point in their historical, literary, and critical study of the last two centuries of "illicit" associations between avant-garde artists and political extremists. Accordingly, Lentricchia and McAuliffe situate the origin of this phenomenon in the Romantic Revolution, as to them, most terrorist groups share the desire beneath many romantic literary visions for

> a terrifying awakening that would undo the West's economic and cultural order whose origin was the Industrial Revolution and whose goal is global saturation… an attitude of revolt that… catches the unnerving radical spirit of the persistent culture of romanticism… Since about 1800, the serious artist is the would-be criminal violator of the order of things, and his role remains consistently romantic, because the social condition, for all its vast changes since Wordsworth, remains, according to serious artists, in deep structural ways, what it was in Wordsworth's day." (p. 2, 18)

Indeed, Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads* violated the popular culture of the day when it made of uneducated, humble, and rustic individuals the protagonists of those prosaic cultural bombs in vernacular language that Wordsworth offered as "high poetry." As Lentricchia and McAuliffe claim, "Readers in 1800, who'd cut their teeth on Shakespeare, Donne, Herbert, and Milton, on Pope and Thomas Gray, could not but feel their literary sensibilities assaulted and battered" (Lentricchia and McAuliffe, 2003, p. 20) by Wordsworth's revolutionary and "popular" style, like that exhibited for example in the poem "The Old Cumberland Beggar," a direct political attack against the utilitarian Poor Relief Act of 1795 that declared illegal for beggars to stay in the streets, forcing them to be confined into institutional poorhouses. The poem opens:

> I saw an aged beggar in my walk,
>
> And he was seated in the highway side
>
> On a low structure of rude masonry
>
> Built at the foot of a huge hill… (1-4: 309)

Wordsworth's 1800 Preface to the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, which constitutes itself a declaration of his radically new "poetic" principles, is considered the founding critical document of the revolutionary Romantic literary movement. Wordsworth exposes in it, as Lentricchia and McAuliffe underline, how

> He feels himself step outside the mainstream of literary history, wherein writers – and their theorist apologists since Plato – tend to consider themselves as quintessential insiders, cultural enforcers, comfortably contracted: artistic

> conservers of the standing culture's ideology – its values and the story that it likes to tell about itself – precisely unlike Wordsworth the destroyer, the would-be instigator of radical change, literary and social, who would break with the culture in place and bear adversarial values and vision. (Lentricchia and McAuliffe, 2003, p. 19).

In spite of Wordsworth's rebellious selection of characters like beggars as protagonists of his poems, the political violent individual as literary figure will not appear fully developed until Dostoyevsky's novel *The Possessed* (1872), later translated as *The Devils* or *Demons*. This novel retells in fiction the story of Sergey Nechayev – named Pyotr Stepanovich Verkhovensky in the novel –, who founded in 1869 the Russian terrorist group People's Retribution, and who was one of the first – and last – who described his own group's activities as terrorist: as Pomper remarks in "Russian Revolutionary Terrorism" (1995), already in 1876 Nechayev substituted the term terrorists for the more euphemistic "disorganizers" when designating his group and himself (Pomper, 1995, p. 77). In Dostoyevsky's *The Possessed*, Verkhovensky attempts to organize a knot of revolutionaries in a provincial Russian area, considering his friend Nikolai Stavrogin central to the plot for his personal lack of sympathy towards humankind. Verkhovensky then founds a terrorist group, and in order to solidify it, he schemes the murder of another conspirator and resolves that one member of his group, Kirillov, shall take the credit for the murder in a suicidal note, as Kirillov already wanted to commit suicide. Verkhovensky kills the conspirator, and as it has been plotted, Kirillov assumes the murder and kills himself. However, Verkhovensky's revolutionary plans fall apart when his friend Nikolai also commits suicide. As we will see, fictional "terrorism" seems doomed from its very origin.

The Modernist literary movement produced indeed some very interesting works portraying different fictional terrorists, yet all of them in a similar disillusioned

manner as Dostoievsky's *The Possessed*. For instance, Henry James' *The Princess Casamassima* (1885-86) tells the story of Hyacinth Robinson, a Londoner bookbinder and aspiring poet who gets involved into a terrorist organization and commits himself to carry out a political assassination whose details he ignores. One night he goes to the theater and there he meets the beautiful Princess Casamassima, with whom he gets acquainted and whom he later visits at her country home. When Hyacinth's mother dies, he travels to France and Italy on his small inheritance. Both his starting friendship with the aristocrat woman and the trip to Europe are definitive in his new appreciation of the immoral yet beautiful world in which he lives, and he internally decides to reject political violence as the one and only way to change the established order. When Hyacinth comes back to London, the details of the terrorist order to assassinate a Duke are delivered to him. Feeling unable to carry out the attack, Hyacinth eventually commits suicide by turning the gun on himself instead of its intended victim.

Two other works which also display this Modernist disillusion about the uselessness of terrorist action are both Joseph Conrad's novels *The Secret Agent* (1908) and *Under Western Eyes* (1911). The former, which is often cited as the quintessential terrorist novel, is also based upon a real violent attack: the 1894 attempt to blow the Greenwich Observatory. *The Secret Agent* tells the story of Mr. Verloc, who, leading in London an anarchist cell, actually ineffectual as terrorist group, also works as "agent provocateur" for a foreign embassy which commands him the destruction of the Greenwich Observatory by a bomb explosion. Verloc lives with his wife Winnie and her mentally disabled brother Stevie, who has a high regard for Verloc. Winnie implores Verloc to spend more time with Stevie, and after both men go for a walk, she notes how her husband and her brother's relationship improves, to

the extent that Verloc tells his wife that Stevie has been invited to spend a few days at the country house of one of Verloc's friends. However, some days later a Chief Inspector arrives at Verloc's house and tells Winnie that Stevie's clothes have appeared at the scene of the bombing. After Verloc confesses his wife how he used Stevie to carry out the attack, she goes mad, stabs her husband to death and disappears, presumably drowned. One of the more interesting aspects of this novel lies in Conrad's manipulation of chronology, as the reader comprehends the outcome of the bombing before the characters. Precisely because of this break – at the moment innovative – with the traditional conception of time, many literary critics like Reilly who have analyzed this work in depth, conclude that *The Secret Agent* with its peculiar chronological structure is "a terrorist text as well as a text about terrorism" that literary enacts its own content (Reilly, 2003, p. 53).

In *Under Western Eyes*, Conrad approaches again the theme of how individuals are sometimes caught inextricably within revolutionary process without their consent. This time is Razumov, a Russian student with a brilliant career in the tsarist bureaucracy, who accidentally gives refuge in his apartment to Haldin, an acquaintance who has committed a political assassination. Although Razumov has not sympathy for his imposed guest's actions, he wrongly turns to his sponsor at the university in order to help Haldin to escape, resulting to be the first step to trap Haldin, who is finally executed. Afterwards Razumov is warmly received at Geneva by Haldin's family and revolutionary friends, who, taking him for Haldin's final friend and ignoring that he actually indicted Haldin, inform him about their insurgent plans in the Baltic region. Tortured by his guilt at betraying Haldin, Razumov confesses to his new friends, who beat him up so brutally that Razumov goes deaf for the rest of his life.

Finally, another noteworthy novel from this period which, yet different in style, also approaches insurgent movements while exposing their eventual futility is G. K. Chesterton's *The Man Who Was Thursday* (1908). The novel narrates the story of a Londoner poet, Gabriel Syme, who is recruited by Scotland Yard to a secret anti-anarchist task group. Later, Syme meets in Saffron Park the anarchist poet Lucian Gregory who leads him to a local anarchist meeting-place, where Syme instead of Gregory gets elected as the local representative to the worldwide Central Council of Anarchists. The Council, which consists of seven men each using the name of a day of the week as a code name, assigns Syme the name of Thursday. In his efforts to frustrate the Council's plans, Syme discovers that five of the other six members of the Council are also undercover agents similarly recruited to thwart the Council's project. In fact, they all are fighting one another and not real anarchists as part of the mastermind plot designed by Sunday. Although Chesterton cannot be regarded a Modernist writer at all,[6] this set of agents and counter-agents who spy one another without realizing it makes of *The Man Who Was Thursday* another example of how political rebellion was "fictionally" conceived at the time as useless and manipulated at the hands of institutions.

The five novels referred above – Dostoyevsky's *The Possessed*, James's *The Princess Casamassima*, Conrad's *The Secret Agent* and *Under Western Eyes*, and Chesterton's *The Man Who Was Thursday* – were written at the turn of the twentieth century and share many stylistic and argumentative features, among them, certain pessimistic view regarding the actual possibilities of insurgent popular organizations. Although the principal protagonists of these five works are all portrayed as romantic rebels, a feature clearly inherited from the Romantic literary period, these novels do

[6] Chesterton's literary arguments and discussions with his friend Bernard Shaw were very popular in the journals of their time. While Shaw argued in favor of the "new" school of Modernist thought, Chesterton's views were more focused on providing a rational basis for Christina faith.

not refrain from presenting an unidealistic portrait of the historical failures of revolutionary movements. As Scanlan claims in her inspiring pre-9/11 analysis of some of these "terrorist" literary works carried out in *Plotting Terror: Novelists and Terrorists in Contemporary Fiction* (2001), "They issue an invitation to see in insurgent terrorism an occasion for exploring the romantic idea of the writer as rebel and for questioning romanticism' optimism about literature's social power" (Scanlan, 2001, p. 10).

The Modernist period was so much affected by World War I that it could hardly survive the late twenties, much less the start of World War II.[7] Likewise, the Great War implied a turning point in both the fictional and non-fictional figure of the political insurgent that lasted far beyond the end of World War II and almost until the sixties. In contrast with the Modernist "independent" rebel, during the World Wars it was well-armed states and most of their population who were involved in everyday violent conflicts. The global contending situation left little space for minor-league ideological rebel groups beyond the general warfare among nation states – or rather bilateral forces, the Triple Entente against the Triple Alliance during World War I, and the Allies against the Axis in World War II. As Scanlan points out, these global conflicts "swallowed up any thought of small insurgent movement" (Scanlan, 2001, p. 11). Similarly, it is observable that the fiction of this period virtually did not approach the figure of the small-scale political violent, and instead, there was a massive production of works both in Europe and the United States which, either directly addressed the universal war conflicts and their everyday consequences in ordinary

[7] For more specific information on the historical and political dimensions of writing terrorist fiction in the Modernist period see Alex Houen's *Terrorism and Modern Literature: From Joseph Conrad to Ciaran Carson* (2002).

people's lives, or antithetically, were popular comedies and romantic fictions "apparently" not engaged at all in the political situation of the period.[8]

Nevertheless, there were some few interesting exceptions to these wartime mainstream tendencies, that is, fictional works which, against the grain, opted to approach the small ideological rebellion as principal argumentative subject. It could not be others but French authors who, matching their country's famous "Resistance" against the Nazi regime, literally resist that general inclination to either address the violent actor within the World Wars context or not addressing it at all. Especially noteworthy are the works *La condition humaine* (1933) by André Malraux, and *Les Justes* (1949) by Albert Camus. The former, a novel translated into English as *Man's Fate*, fictionalizes the failed communist revolt occurred in Shanghai in 1927 against Chiang Kai-shek's regime. The novel occurs during a twenty-one day period and one of its principal assets is that it portrays four different existential attitudes towards the idea of revolution represented in its four principal protagonists: Tchen Ta Erh, the obsessive and traumatized assassin governed by fatality and whose involvement with the terrorist cause just obeys to an uncontrollable desire to kill others and himself. Accordingly, Tchen desperately seeks his own death by killing others to end his torment; Kyo Gisors, the leader of the revolt and the counterpoint to Tchen, as Kyo firmly believes that each person must choose his or her own meaning in life. He puts his conviction into practice when, after being captured, he commits suicide in a final act of self-determination; Katov, the experienced soviet emissary who, after having faced execution once before during the Russian Civil War, observes with calm detachment how his fellow comrades are tortured and killed one by one while he is in possession of an instant killing capsule which would prevent them from any suffering.

[8] It can also be argued that these works' apparent disengagement with the world affairs was in fact a consequence of the global conflicts *per se*, as they were mostly created to make readers/spectators forget for a moment their hard war-time conditions of living.

However, in a final and heroic act, Katov gives his capsule to two weaker prisoners and confronts the fact of being burned alive; finally, the fourth protagonist is Baron De Clappique, the constantly good humored yet inwardly suffering French merchant accomplice to Kyo. De Clappique is an obsessive gambler, an addiction which he considers a form of "suicide without dying." In his way to warn Kyo that he is going to be imprisoned and killed, De Clappique gets involved in gambling and cannot stop, being finally the only one of his group who survives.

Camus's play *Les Justes*, translated into English as *The Just Assassins* or *The Just ones*, is also based upon an actual insurgent group, the Russian terrorist cell responsible for the political assassination of the Grand Duke of Russia Sergei Romanov in 1905. The play is very keen and acute at showing some moral issues associated with political murder and terrorism, for instance, when it portrays the internal debate generated among the terrorist protagonists when Kaliayev, who had been elected to perpetrate the meticulously planned attempt to assassin the Duke, is unable to throw the bomb at the Duke's carriage claiming that two children, the Duke's nephew and niece, were also traveling inside the intended target. When Kaliayev is imprisoned for having eventually succeeded in the group's second attempt to murder the Duke, he is visited by the widowed Duchess, who moves him with the familiar drama behind the political act. However, she does not finally convince him with her offer to free him from prison on condition that he publicly declares himself a murderer rather than a revolutionary. Kaliayev is executed, and the play ends with a chant to violent political action, as his friends vow to throw themselves into terrorism to destroy tyranny and avenge Kaliayev.

Malraux's and Camus's works, as it was already mentioned above, constitute literary exceptions within a period in which both real and fictional terrorism had

diminished to the point that in 1933 the *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* assured that terrorism had become "outmoded as a revolutionary method" (Hardman, 1933, p. 576). Zulaika and Douglass, confirm this vision in *Terror and Taboo: The Follies, Fables, and Faces of Terrorism* (1996) while also observing the results of an interesting survey carried out in 1989 by Ronald Crelinsten on the frequency of the term *terrorism* within the headlines of newspapers and periodicals published between 1966 and 1985. In the four major indexes analyzed by Crelinsten, which were the *New York Times Index*, the *London Times Index*, the *British Humanities Index*, and the *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature*, it can be observed that before 1970 only the last one included "terrorism" as a heading, yet by 1972, all four did. Moreover, before 1970, words like *assassinations, bombing, torture, repression,* and *massacre* appeared as separate headings, but after 1972, these events were mostly subsumed under the heading "terrorism" (Crelinsten, 1989, p. 175; Zulaica and Douglass, 1996, p. 17-45).

The seventies was indeed the decade in which both actual and literary terrorism remerged in the public arena with such a powerful strength that has lasted until today at an exponentially increasing rate. Television became the primary medium for the terrorist story, as it occurred with the first global terrorist broadcast which took place during the 1972 Summer Olympics in Munich, when approximately 800 million viewers around the world watched the day-long hostage drama and eventual massacre of eleven members of the Israeli Olympic Team in the hands of the Palestinian terrorist group Black September. Inspired on this televised terrorist action, and benefiting from the worldwide audience peaks it indirectly brought about, the factory of fiction did not take long to explode the public anxieties generated around the violent terrorist phenomenon as such. Thomas Harris's novel *Black Sunday* (1975), which narrates the conspiracy between an American traumatized pilot at

World War II and an operative of a Palestinian terrorist group – coincidentally called Black September – to detonate a blimp over the Miami Orange Bowl during a Super Bowl X became an instant best-seller. In 1977 the homonym film directed by John Frankenheimer and inspired on Harris's novel enjoyed equal success.

The seventies was also the decade that saw the rise and climax of nationalist, terrorist organizations in Western Europe like Euskadi Ta Askatusuna (ETA) in Spain and the Provisional Irish Republican Army (Provisional IRA) in Northern Ireland and England. The first half of the seventies was indeed the most intense period of the Provisional IRA terrorist campaign. According to O'Brien's *The Long War: The IRA and Sinn Fein* (1995),[9] about half the total of 500 or so British soldiers to die in the conflict were killed in the years 1971-73, and in 1972 alone, the IRA killed 100 British soldiers, wounded 500 more, and carried out 1,300 explosions (O'Brien, 1995, p. 119, 135). In the case of ETA, it was instead the last half of the seventies which proved to be ETA's most deadly years. As Martínez-Herrera confirmed in "National Extremism and Outcomes of State Policies in the Basque Country, 1979-2001" (2002),[10] it was from 1978 to 1980 when ETA assassinated more people: 68, 76, and 91 fatalities, respectively (Martínez-Herrera, 2002, p. 10).

During the eighties and nineties the terrorist figure was approached by fictional works in a more morally complex way than in the seventies, and by a new generation of more "serious" authors and artists, in the sense that they were more politically committed and less interested in the spectacular of terrorism as a means to reach the top of best-sellers lists. This turn in the fictional approach to the terrorist

[9] Brendan O'Brien is an Irish journalist and researcher, and an expert in the history of Ireland and the IRA.
[10] Enric Martínez-Herrera is Professor of Political Science at Universidad Autónoma de Madrid. His 2002 article referred in the text was published in the UNESCO's *International Journal of Multicultural Studies*.

phenomenon was in keeping with the news media when they echoed several national scandals involving either unfair trials against supposed terrorists who turned out not to be so, or radical state-sponsored counter-terrorist operations. For example, in Spain, between 1983 and 1987, the GAL (Grupos Antiterroristas de Liberación) committed assassinations, kidnappings and torture, not only of ETA members but also of civilians supposedly related to them. As Carcedo reported in *Sáez de Santamaría, el general que cambió de bando* (2003),[11] many victims of the GAL turned out to have nothing to do with ETA (Carcedo, 2003, p. 437). Therefore, in contrast with the one-dimensional representation of the irrational "evil" terrorist in the stereotyping thriller hits of the seventies, a new kind of fictional works emerged, not many but at least some, which explored the terrorist cause under different perspectives. On the specific representation of ETA, one of the most remarkable film-makers within this new tendency was the Basque Imanol Uribe, who in films like *La muerte de Mikel* (1983) and especially *Días Contados* (1994) portrayed ETA terrorists not as part of a solid death-motivated organization but as individuals with sometimes opposed moral concerns.

In the case of Provisional IRA, the Guilford Four and the Maguire Seven were two sets of people wrongly convicted by English courts in 1975 and 1976 respectively, with sentences varying from 12 years to life imprisonment because of their "supposed" involvement with the terrorist organization. After their arrest, some of the defendants confessed their responsibility in terrorist attacks as the result of coercion by the police which ranged from intimidation to torture, including threats against family members. After several years in prison, and the hard work carried out by particular lawyers who proved in court that the alleged terrorists' confessions had

[11] Diego Carcedo is a reputed Spanish journalist. He was Director of the News Section in TVE (Television Española), Director of RNE (Radio Nacional de España), and President of AEJ (Association of European Journalists).

been manipulated, and that the officials in charge in that moment withheld information that would have cleared the suspects, those who remained alive from the Four Guilford and the Seven Maguire were released and their verdicts repealed in 1989 and 1991, respectively. Inspired on the autobiography of one of the Four Guilford, Gerry Conlon's *Proved Innocent* (1991), the distinguished Irish film director Jim Sheridan adapted Conlon's story to the big screen in the film *In the Name of the Father* (1993), which, with an exceptional cast, was nominated for seven Academy Awards in the following year. In fact, Jim Sheridan's involvement with the representation of those "other" sides of IRA terrorism became materialized in later films he produced like *Some Mother's Son* (1996), directed by Terry George, and which depicts the perspective of a convicted terrorist's mother, and *The Boxer* (1997), directed by Sheridan himself, and which portrays how an ex-convicted IRA member attempts to stay out of political violence starting a boxing club for young people in his neighborhood.

It was not by accident that in the eighties and nineties the terrorist plot became approached by postmodern authors, especially considering its enormous possibilities as the crisscrossed *locus* for typically postmodern fields like history, politics, media, language, and issues like the thorny questions that terrorism posits to the "Grand Narrative" of morality in the Lyotardian sense. As Scanlan remarks, "a new generation of more serious novelists... such as Doris Lessing and Don DeLillo, Mary McCarthy and Friedrich Dürrenmatt, find terrorist themes congenial for exploring the influence of fiction on history and politics, the relation between language and violence, the nature of power and the impetus to resist (Scanlan, 2001, p. 13).[12]

[12] Scanlan's *Plotting Terror: Novelists and Terrorists in Contemporary Fiction* (2001), yet published before 9/11, constitutes an excellent and inspiring study on how the contemporary terrorist novel conceives terrorism as a constructed phenomenon and measures terrorism's impact against its own possibilities for changing political and social reality. More specifically focused on the relationship

The list of writers who, either within the postmodern movement yet typically reluctant to such label, or through popular best-sellers, explored the question of terrorism in fiction in the eighties and nineties is voluminous and substantial, both in quantity and quality. I will cite here just some few representative works which constitute a mere literary snapshot of the prolific and interesting fictional material created during this period on the topic of terrorism. Some fundamental pieces are: Mary McCarthy's exploration of the psychology of terrorism and the overestimation of the artistic artifact in *Cannibals and Missionaries* (1979); Doris Lessing's analysis of terrorism as a psychopathological phenomenon when practiced by squatters involved in terrorist activities far beyond their level of competence in *The Good Terrorist* (1985); Friedrich Dürrenmatt's *The Assignment* (1988), a Kierkegaardian novella, originally published as *Der Auftrag* (1986), in which the technologies of observation are explored together with terrorist issues; Don DeLillo's insightful commitment with the representation of terrorism and political violence throughout his entire career, as in *Players* (1977), *The Names* (1982), *Libra* (1988), *Mao II* (1991), and *Underworld* (1997);[13] John le Carré's spy novel *The Little Drummer Girl* (1983), which inspects Middle Eastern terrorism in the form of a classical Western suspense thriller; Philip Roth's *Operation Shylock: A Confession* (1993), *American Pastoral* (1997) and *The Plot Against America* (2004), which, respectively set during the First Intifada against Israel, at some Vietnam War protests, and into an alternate historical US presidency of a supposedly Nazi Lindbergh, all approach terrorism intrinsically intertwined with actual historical and political discourses; Eoin McNamee's

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between "Terrorism and the Postmodern Novel" was the homonym university course conducted by Robert Appelbaum in spring 2006 at Lancaster University, in which, through the analysis of some postmodern, terrorist, fictional works, it was inspected which responses – and questions – were provided by literary fiction to the reality of terrorism in the post-modern age.

[13] DeLillo's representation of terror is approached in depth in Chapter Five when discussing his 9/11 novel *Falling Man* (2007).

exploration of sectarian violence in Belfast in *Resurrection Man* (1994); J.M. Coetzee's *The Master of Petersburg* (1994), in which reality and metafiction converge to the extreme when a fictionalized Dostoievsky, while writing his actual terrorist novel *The Possessed* (1872), dangerously interacts with the Russian terrorist Nechayev to get information for his artistic work; Robert Stone's *Damascus Gate* (1998), in which a Catholic journalist travels to Jerusalem to revitalize his faith yet gets instead involved into a terrorist plot; Tom Clancy's *The Sum of All Fears* (1991), an alternate history set in the Middle East where a nuclear bomb falls into the hands of a terrorist group just when peace seems possible; and finally, Patrick McCabe's *Breakfast on Pluto* (1998), the story of a rent boy in Piccadilly Circus whose transvestitism looks suspiciously to paramilitary agents due to his former IRA connections during his violent childhood in an Irish town. The list of fictional works of this period which reflect on terrorist issues from such various perspectives and tones as presented above is limitless. Nevertheless, since the focus of my study is the representation of terrorism in fiction after the 9/11 attacks, I have not addressed either the fruitful literature that deals with the Irish question nor the complex works that have explored the Basque question from its different perspectives. Moreover, there is another leg of historical-political writing that falls outside the scope of the present study. It has to do with the literature – fictional or otherwise – that has approached the different radical, libertarian, situationist and even terrorist movements and groups that erupted as radical criticism of the European democracies in the aftermath of the WWII, most notably among them, the Baader-Meinhof in the Germany of the seventies and the Brigatte Rosse in Italy in the same period. The literature around them is extensive and covers a whole spectrum of ideological, cultural and literary issues; from the writings of the protagonists themselves to such established writers

and artists as Heinrich Böll, Günter Grass or Gerhard Richter, or Pasolini and Negri in Italy. Needless to say, the whole movement known as New German Film, notably film-makers as Fassbinder among others, cannot be understood outside those times of internal strife. It is also to be said that the issue is intimately linked with the European intellectual climate of the sixties and seventies as Sartre famous visit to Baader and Meinhof in the prison of Stammheim attests. It goes without saying that the intellectual work of people like Foucault for instance, among many, cannot be understood outside the "episteme" of the times when state violence was played upon other types of violence, some of them labeled terrorism. It has to be said though that my study approaches the subject from the perspective of the multicultural *doxa* in which we are living today, when terrorism is seen as a response of a minority culture against a major one, while the above mentioned movements were born and grew within precisely the core of an uncontested culture of democracy.

Eventually, the twenty-first century virtually started with the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks against the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, setting in motion a whole ideological – and military – Western machinery which, as we will see, recovered that one-sided "evil" portrait of the terrorist figure of the seventies both in fictional and non-fictional discourses, this time even more racially, ethnically, and religiously biased than before. This project will address what ideological stands were adopted and promoted when representing in fiction the 9/11 terrorist attacks and especially their perpetrators. However, before directly leaping into the analysis of these 9/11 works and their circumstances of production, the following and also introductory Chapter Two "The Academy on 9/11 Fiction" is devoted to those few former academic works which have approached this corpus of 9/11 fictions.

I would like to conclude this first chapter, this brief walk throughout the literary history of terrorist fiction, going back to no less than Aristotle, who first advanced the "medical" benefits from watching fictional tragic events. In *Poetics*, he applied the term "catharsis" for the first time to a set of sensations that an audience ideally releases after contemplating the end of a tragedy. "It is the human soul that is purged of its excessive passions," Aristotle stated (Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1449b25f). Today, in spite of Adorno's over-quoted remark about the barbaric of "writing poetry after Auschwitz" (Adorno, 1949, p. 19), there is no doubt regarding how "trauma" fiction intrinsically participates in the construction of meanings associated with the event *per se*, in our case, the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.[14] Let us approach then the analysis of how these terrorist identities have been elaborated by 9/11 Western fictions.

[14] On trauma fiction see Felman and Laub (1992), LaCapra (2001), Vickroy (2002), Whitehead (2004), and Kaplan (2005).

Chapter 2

The Academia on 9/11 Fiction

"Novels about 9/11 can't stack up to non-fiction." This is the title of an article written in the *USA Today* by the critic Bob Minzesheimer, who assures that 9/11 non-fiction could "perfectly fill a whole section of a bookstore reaching 1,036 titles" (Minzesheimer, 2007). It is quite a lot considering that all these non-fictional works have been written after September 2001 and about the same historical event. However, as Minzesheimer also remarks, much fewer are the works that have attempted to explore 9/11 through fiction: Minzesheimer estimates that there are only around 30 novels approaching the events of 9/11 and their consequences. I have actually found about 80 novels – it also depends on what exactly is considered a 9/11 fictional work, an issue not enough debated –, 13 comics and graphic novels, and about 250 short stories recollected in no more than 5 different anthologies, still less than the overwhelming non-fictional production on the topic. Regarding visual productions, the difference between the amount of fictional and non-fictional works is even higher: 11 movies, 9 TV series and docudramas and 4 plays that I have accessed to, compared to more than a hundred documentaries dealing with the events of September 11, 2001, their causes and consequences.

If fictional explorations of 9/11 are much fewer in number than their non-fictional counterparts, even more reduced is the amount of research devoted by the academia to the analysis of such fictional works as a group. This chapter is devoted to the critical analysis of those few former studies on the specific corpus of 9/11 fictional products.

The first aspect that calls our attention when observing these few academic works that approach 9/11 fiction as their object of analysis is that these studies are

mostly and specifically focused on a particular medium or even genre: 9/11 literature – especially 9/11 novels –, comics and 9/11, 9/11 films… Therefore, one of the initial challenges that the current research on 9/11 fiction posits to the incoming scholar seems to be the elaboration of much more multidisciplinary and comparative analyses of 9/11 works which, although coming from different artistic fields, encompass similar content and address the 9/11 events with resembling argumentative and ideological perspectives.

On literature, there is *Literature after 9/11* (2007), a multiple-author work edited by Keniston and Quinn. In their Introduction "Representing 9/11: Literature and Resistance," Keniston and Quinn argue that one of the principal characteristics of the varied body of 9/11 literary works is their inhabitance of spaces between the real and the imaginary, between the lived experience and the imaginative representation, and between "the private realm of memory and the public realm of history" (Keniston and Quinn, 2007, p. 2). Therefore, according to them, 9/11 literature is marked by "the tension between the private experience and the necessarily social means for representing it" (Keniston and Quinn, 2007, p. 3). Indeed, such tension becomes evident by the large amount of 9/11 fictional works which depart from the autobiographical question "Where-were-you-on-9/11" to explore fictional possibilities, and consequently oscillate between the real and the imaginary domains.

Another feature that Keniston and Quinn attribute to the highly varied body of 9/11 literary works is their "critiques of and challenges to political discourses" which precisely "seek to simplify or fix the meaning of 9/11" (Keniston and Quinn, 2007, p. 3). In this respect, I partly disagree with Keniston and Quinn because, while it is true that some 9/11 works defy such political appropriations of 9/11, many other 9/11 fictional works – actually, the immense majority of them – perpetuate such simplistic

institutional perspectives. This entire project serves as evidence of such affirmation, as this research was indeed conceived partly due to the unpleasant astonishment I personally experienced when I found the omnipresence of President George W. Bush's warmongering, dichotomical, and blindly patriotic rhetoric within most 9/11 fictions I encountered. Furthermore, and coming back to Keniston and Quinn's statement, what also intrigues me is the fact that if it is so clearly perceived by them that these 9/11 fictions defy such simplistic political discourses, why the body of 9/11 works has not yet being approached by the academia – with few exceptions – in comparative analysis with such political stances and appropriations. That is precisely what this project intends to: scrutinize which ideological messages and positions are either promoted or defied by different 9/11 fictions.

As a compiled volume, *Literature after 9/11* is formed by different contributions which are structured into three chapters: Part One "Experiencing 9/11," containing those essays which address how different 9/11 works relate to witnessing and trauma; Part Two "9/11 Politics and Representation," with those contributions approaching how 9/11 literary works represent the political or public sphere; and Part Three "9/11 and the Literary Tradition," inspecting the literary status *per se* of some 9/11 literary works. As a natural consequence of its own compiled nature, the volume precisely lacks more comparative and multidisciplinary contributions, because each of them approach either one single 9/11 fictional piece – sometimes as much as two –, or a branch of 9/11 narratives grouped by a common genre, like Simon Cooper and Paul Atkinson's "Graphic Implosion: Politics, Time and Value in Post-9/11 Comics," or Robert Brustein's "Theater after 9/11", both pieces resulting very inspiring, yet in their respective single-genre analyses.

One last remarkable aspect about Keniston and Quinn's approach to 9/11 literary works is how they trace the history of 9/11 literature observing certain evolution from the earliest rewritings of the event, shorter forms and more focused on loss and the event itself, to later and more complex representational narratives in which 9/11 is "less what these works are about than an event to which they refer" (Keniston and Quinn, 2007, p. 3). In this respect, although Keniston and Quinn highlight the tensions between direct and indirect representations of 9/11, more discussion on what a 9/11 work is and is not, could have been further developed. When approaching the topic of 9/11 fiction as an object of study, one important issue that should be addressed precisely belongs to this ontological level of what exactly a 9/11 fictional work is. One possible answer could be that any work which reflects upon the events of September 11, 2001, in a fictional way would fall into the corpus of 9/11 fiction. However, it is not so simple. For instance, in Paul Auster's *Brooklyn Follies* (2006), 9/11 just appears as a brief and ominous reference in the last chapter, and the happy ending of the novel is darkened when the protagonist steps out into the street to go to work at eight o'clock in the specific morning of September 11, 2001 (304). Does such short and final comment make the whole novel a 9/11 work? Another example is Philip Beard's novel *Dear Zoe* (2005), in which on September 11, 2001, but far from New York or Washington, a girl loses her sister to a hit-and-run driver. The novel does not deal with the terrorist events of that day, yet, does not it reflect in fiction on what Judith Butler denounced in one of her 9/11 essays apropos of who constitutes a national, mournable death and who does not? (Butler, 2004). One last example of the difficulty of setting the boundaries of the 9/11 fictional corpus is Spike Lee's film *The 25th Hour* which, based on David Benioff's homonym novel, portrays a convicted drug dealer's last day of freedom before facing a seven-year

sentence. In this case, it is the place setting, a traumatized post-9/11 New York, what links the film to the 9/11 topic. Should any fictional work settled in a post-9/11 dystopian landscape be included into the corpus of 9/11 fictional works? Regarding the concerns of this research, the fact that a novel or film includes the 9/11 attacks into its argument does not directly imply its incursion into the 9/11 fictional corpus, in the same way that a novel or film which does not refer to 9/11 straightforwardly but does it allegorically can constitute a better space for reflection upon the nature of the terrorist attacks and their consequences.

The specific genre of the novel and its relationship to 9/11 is approached by *Novels of the Contemporary Extreme* (2006) a multi-author volume edited by Durand and Mandel. In their Introduction, Durand and Mandel state that the book investigates what seems to have become a global literary phenomenon: a kind of novel which does "not merely reflect on violence," but "seek it out, engage it, and in a variety of imaginative ways, perform it" (Durand and Mandel, 2006, p. 1). Durand and Mandel do not link directly this literary sensation to 9/11, as it is evidenced by the abundant presence of critical analyses of many "violent" novels of the nineties inside the volume. However, Duran and Mandel argue that the popularity and notoriety of this "extreme" literature is connected to "the deliberate erasure of the distinction between the fictional and the autobiographical that occurs in many of these novels" (Durand and Mandel, 2006, p. 1), a feature already recognized and attached to 9/11 fiction by Keniston and Quinn as it was remarked above.

Both Mandel and Durand contribute respectively to their compiled volume with an essay: while Mandel's addresses Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho* (1991), Durand's is focused on Frédéric Beigbeder's *Windows on the World* (2005). In fact, out of the fifteen essays which configure *Novels of the Contemporary Extreme*,

Durand's "Beyond the Extreme: Frédéric Beigbeder's *Windows on the World*" is the only one that approaches a 9/11 work. Therefore, although Durand's contribution points to a key issue when addressing "the challenge that extreme violence poses to representation" (Durand and Mandel, 2007, p. 3), the volume as a whole, though stimulating, is not very useful to our 9/11 fiction concerns.

Much more linked to this project's interests is the university seminar "9/11" given by Durand himself at the University of Rhode Island in the spring of 2007, probably originated after the publication of the mentioned volume. Not only did the seminar approach 9/11 fiction after having introduced some 9/11 theorists like Baudrillard, Virilio, and Zizec, key authors in order to address the 9/11 topic with certain theoretical basis, but the seminar also addressed pivotal issues when attempting to identify the characteristics that seem to shape the corpus of 9/11 works, or when it questioned whether there was such a thing as a literature of 9/11 at all, and if there was, how one could describe and explain it, or who had the authority (if anyone) to write about it (Durand "9/11"). The seminar also allowed the students to participate in an online electronic forum, where they could discuss some 9/11 novels with their respective authors, like *Windows on the World* (2005), *Incendiary* (2006), and *After* (2004, written by Frédéric Beigbeder, Chris Cleave, and Claire Tristram, respectively.

Another academic work which is also focused on the specific 9/11 novelistic genre is *Out of the Blue: September 11 and the Novel* (2009), a single-author piece written by Versluys, and centered on the analysis of five 9/11 novels: DeLillo's *Falling Man* (2007), Foer's *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* (2005), Updike's *Terrorist* (2006), Beigbeder's *Windows on the World* (2005), and Spiegelman's graphic novel *In the Shadow of No Towers* (2004). Versluys remarks on his selection

of works that what these five works have in common is that "they move beyond patriotic strategies" and sensationalisms, and "provide new insight into the emotional and ethical impact" of the 9/11 events into the ordinary citizen (Versluys, 2009, p. 1). Regarding the "moving beyond patriotic discourses" aspect remarked about these novels, I completely disagree, especially in the case of Updike's *Terrorist*, because as it will be shown later on, it obviously promotes simplistic and nationalistic equations which link the United States to the idea of "life" and Islam to a "culture of death".[15] If Versluys' selection of works is allegedly based on these narratives' succeed in their portraying of "the humanity of the disoriented individual as opposed to the cocksure killer" (Versluys, 2009, p. 1), I do not consider this aspect something to be praised but rather something to be interrogated. If Versluys were right, his selected novels would promote a biased and limited version of "us" as "disoriented victims" and of "them" as "overconfident killers" which only serves to consolidate certain convenient patriotic and warmongering clichés, both victimizing the 9/11 victims and demonizing the terrorists, something neither to be celebrated nor exalted at all. This particular perception of the terrorist as a "cocksure" figure is denounced by Žižec as a typically westernist attitude, when he assures that it is the western interpreter who usually attributes such confidence to the terrorists as a given (Žižec, 2002, p. 72).

Regarding those academic works which addressed the analysis of the 9/11 audiovisual fictional production, it is noteworthy the multi-author volume *Film and Television after 9/11* (2004) edited by Dixon. In his introductory essay to the work, Dixon remarks in the same line as Durand, how there seems to exist a "renewed appetite for narratives of conflict" (Dixon, 2004, p. 1). However, Dixon goes beyond the mere mentioning of such phenomenon and enters into its ideological and political

[15] Chapter Seven is entirely devoted to the analysis of Updike's 9/11 novel *Terrorist*, while Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* is addressed in Chapter Five.

analysis when he remarks how these post-9/11 films reflect a "variety of impulses" in relation to the war on Iraq:

> Some films seem to encourage a warrior spirit, while still others question it, and others still avoid the issue altogether. While some contemporary films offer escapism, the bulk of mainstream American cinema since 9/11… seems centered on a desire to replicate the idea of 'just war' in which military reprisals… seem simultaneously inevitable and justified. (p. 1)

Dixon is even more direct in his denounce of how the TV medium appropriated 9/11 for warmongering uses:

> Television 'news' channels broadcast an unremitting stream of propaganda that makes *1984* seem tame in comparison… [9/11 was] commodified and repackaged, cheapened by commemorative plates or hastily assembled 'memorial' videos that… obliterated all attempts to comprehend the scope of its impact. (p. 3-4)

Once again, the editor's introductory piece to the entire volume is the most interesting to our concern, as it is the only one which addresses the corpus of fictional works produced after 9/11 as a set without forgetting its enormous diversity. The rest of the eleven contributions that constitute *Film and Television after 9/11* are focused on as much as two fictional works. Moreover, as the very title of the volume indicates, most of its essays deal with films and TV series created "after" 9/11, not "about" or "on" 9/11, that is, the analyses carried out are more focused on some consequences of the attacks in the film and TV media, rather than on the 9/11 fictional products *per se* which attempted to reflect on the nature of the terrorist attacks.

One of the first volumes published about 9/11 and its cultural production was *Terror, Culture, Politics: Rethinking 9/11* (2004), a multi-author work edited by Sherman and Nardin. The principal asset of Sherman and Nardin's analysis is their identification of "a market for popular novels and movies that channel white male anger and frustration away from its direct causes and toward an imaginary enemy that is 'evil' because it opposes American ideals" (Sherman and Nardin, 2004, p. 5).

Besides their denouncing of such demonizing tendency within the corpus of 9/11 fiction, Sherman and Nardin's introductory piece, as well as Sherman's individual contribution "Naming and the Violence of Place," focus on condemning the fixation on the temporal identifier "9/11" and how it has been misused as vehicle to grandiloquent assertions like "9/11 changed everything" (Sherman and Nardin, 2004, p. 4). Sherman and Nardin interrogate such statement when they wonder "for whom it changed," and suggest that behind this "9/11 changed everything," there is simply the "belated discovery by members of one particular privileged community that they are not invulnerable" (Sherman and Nardin, 2004, p. 4).

However, as it occurs with other multi-author works already mentioned, the most concerning contribution regarding 9/11 fictional works is precisely the introductory one by Sherman and Nardin. The volume is structured into two sections, Image/Memory and Ethics/Politics, each containing six individual essays, among which just the fourth one, Henry Jenkins's "Captain America Sheds His Mighty Tears: Comic and September 11," explores 9/11 fictions, in this case, the comic projects which emerged after the 9/11 attacks.

One of the most recent and "panoramic" academic works concerning 9/11 cultural products is *9/11 Culture: America Under Construction* (2009) by Melnick. This single-author volume derives from the course "9/11 Culture" which Melnick himself has been teaching at Babson College since 2005. This course has provided many remarkable advantages to the resulting published work which are clearly observable: firstly, after having worked for the last four years and with different groups of students on the analysis of the 9/11 cultural production, Melnick has undoubtedly become an expert in the field; secondly, *9/11 Culture* has obviously benefited from Melnick's students' contributions throughout these four years, both at

the level of currency and "aliveness" that the published work possess, and also in relation to the high amount and variety of the 9/11 material identified and analyzed – which varies from bigoted rumors in the Internet to reputed authors' novels, from telethons or rap songs to TV commercials, all in relation to 9/11–. Melnick's published work's vitality gets confirmed when, for instance, Melnick provides at the end of his research a "Note to Teachers" underlining which was his first choice of 9/11 pieces to work with in his class, and which are the most recent ones he works with, creating then a brief history of 9/11 cultural analysis (Melnick, 2009).

As a consequence of its own essentially panoramic structure, Melnick's *9/11 Culture* lacks precisely in more in-depth analyses of the 9/11 works it addresses. Except from its deeper exploration of the post-9/11 resurrection of certain male bravery clichés in works like Oliver Stone's *World Trade Center* (2006), Melnick's work does not dedicate more than two paragraphs to the analysis of the same 9/11 product. Nevertheless, its pertinence as multidisciplinary and referential work regarding the post-9/11 cultural expression, and the "provisional roadmaps" (Melnick, 2009, p. 5) Melnick successfully outlines about this new field make of his work an essential starting point to any 9/11 incoming researcher.

Finally, one last volume that is worthy to be mentioned is *The War on Terror and American Popular Culture: September 11 and Beyond* (2009), a multi-author work edited by Schopp and Hill. This time, it is not the 9/11 attacks but the War on Terror which succeeded them the primary focus of attention of this study. Therefore, although some very interesting contributions address precisely how different fictions either reinforced or endorsed the mentioned War on Terror, this shift from terrorism to counter-terrorism as the principal object of study makes this work less relevant to our concern of how 9/11 *per se* is ideologically rewritten by fiction.

In summary, after having introduced the academic landscape of works which have approached the fictional production derived from/ inspired on/in response to the 9/11 attacks, there seems to be three main avoided issues by the current academia of which I have already mentioned two of them: i) there is not or very few comparative analysis of 9/11 works with similar content yet from different artistic fields – except for Melnick's *9/11 culture* – but instead, reiterative and closed restriction to a particular medium or even genre, different in each case – comics and 9/11, 9/11 novels… –; ii) there is not or very few discussion on what exactly is a 9/11 fictional work – what if 9/11 just appears as back landscape, or as a mere comment? Is that a 9/11 work? What about post-9/11 works? –; and finally, the aspect whose absence gave origin to the approach adopted by this project and to the project itself, iii) there is not or very few analysis of the ideological stances assumed and perpetuated by these fictional works in their active and biased re-creation of the historical event. If our goal is to analyze works in which history, fiction and ideology converge to such extent as it is the case with the corpus of 9/11 fiction, it seems mandatory the exploration of these fictional works in the light of the most influential 9/11 theorists and their non-fictional production. The comparative analysis of how 9/11 fictional products interact with their non-fictional counterparts, either reproducing or reacting against the mainstream ideographs, offers an interesting insight into how fictional works in general and 9/11 fictions in particular actively participate in the configuration of the common *doxa* they belong to.

The current restriction of most published academic analyses of 9/11 fictions to particular genres or media as it was shown above creates a total absence of research giving priority to the similarity of ideological messages conveyed, or the resembling narratological strategies adopted, over the specific medium or genre employed. In

recent years, there has been carried out a high amount of literary and cultural theory addressing the intertwined and mutually constitutive disciplines of history, literature and ideology, especially by intellectual historians, new historicists, and cultural materialists with different approaches and conclusions in each case. It is surprising the lack of such theoretical frames within the existing analysis on how 9/11 popular fictions do actually reconstruct the event making the readers/spectators to reconfigure their ideological positions towards it. Acknowledging that fiction does not only reflect relations of power but it actively participates in the creation of history and in the consolidation of certain ideological messages, the issue that seems still untouched by the academia is what ideological stances are assumed and perpetuated by these 9/11 fictional works.

Much more in the line of this ideological approach, there are some research works still unpublished which give testimony of both the currency of the 9/11-fiction topic and the incoming lines of investigation that will be adopted in the future by the academia regarding the analysis of these 9/11 fictional productions: I am referring to other PhD theses and to several university courses and seminars emerging around the world which attempt to analyze these 9/11 cultural pieces. Three interesting and still unpublished research works I have had access to and which are related to partially similar concerns than this dissertation are: Pletsch's "Images of Apocalypse: Memorialization vs. Fetishization in the Graphic Novels of 9/11" (2006), centered on how some 9/11 comic projects reinforced Bush's good-and-evil binaries encouraging the use of military force in response to the attacks, while others like Art Spiegelman's *In the Shadow of No Towers* experienced the tension between sharing a 9/11 personal experience and enshrining an unhealthy reverencing for the attacks;[16] Findlay's

[16] Mary C. Pletsch's research is registered as MA Thesis at Dalhousie University, Canada.

"Changing Representations of the City in New York and 9/11 Fictions" (2009), which explores fictional representations of New York City pre- and post-9/11;[17] and Walts's "Ideographs and the War on Terror: A Criticism of George W. Bush's Post-9/11 Discourse" (2006), focused on how the four concepts of *9/11*, *America*, *Terrorist* and *War on Terror* have been ideologically constructed and abused of within Bush's post-9/11 warmongering rhetoric.[18]

Regarding those university seminars and courses that have approached 9/11 from its fictional and cultural production, there are many apart from the two already mentioned above, that is, Melnick's "9/11 Culture" at Babson College from 2005 to 2009, and Durand's "9/11" at the University of Rhode Island in the spring of 2007.Among the most interesting ones we can find: "Literature of 9/11" directed by Amitava Kumar at Vassar College in the spring of 2008, which attempted to address theoretical questions starting from the analysis of 9/11 fictions, such as how writers respond to historical events or in which ways imagination is used to deal with trauma; Stephanie Harzewski's "Post-9/11 Fiction" at the University of Pennsylvania in the fall of 2008, which primarily explored the subgenre of "the disaster novel" or post-apocalyptic fiction and how distinguished writers have integrated 9/11 and its surrounding political climate into it; "Literature and Culture After 9/11," directed by James Mulholland at Wheaton College in the spring of 2009, in which the class discussions were centered around the pretentious "9/11-changed-everything" claim and on whether or not American literature and culture reflects this change; Cara Cilano's editorial project "From Solidarity to Schisms: 9/11 and After in Fiction and Film from Outside the US" at the University of North Carolina Wilmington, focused on how writers and filmmakers from outside the US have represented September 11,

[17] Laura Findlay's research is registered as PhD Thesis at the University of Dundee, Scotland.
[18] Charles L. Walts's research is registered as PhD Thesis at the University of Southern Illinois.

2001, and what different manner of critique is offered by them; and finally, Aliki Varvogli's group research at the University of Dundee, which in the fall of 2007 explored post-9/11 Anglo-American literary relations through the analysis of some British literary responses to 9/11 such as Ian McEwan's *Saturday* (2005). Although all these referred courses have not derived into publications yet, they give testimony of the academia's increasing interest on how the historical narrative of the attacks of September 11, 2001, can be approached through the analysis of the fictional productions inspired on them and which finally end up re-writing the event in the collective imagination.

In conclusion, in contrast with the principal tendency of academic publishing on 9/11 fiction which addresses the works by genre or medium of production and hardly in reference to the ideological stances adopted/promoted by them, the approach that I will undertake here follows more the multi-disciplinary lines of research recently opened both at various emerging courses and seminars and by fresh postgraduate's Ph and MA research projects. Accordingly, I will consider 9/11 fiction as an ideological battlefield which mostly posits voices in support of the perpetuation of the hegemony, in the Gramscian sense, of certain privileged social groups over the rest on the basis of racial, gender, and nationalistic factors while contributing to the "literal" re-writing of the historical event of 9/11 in concordance with biased and bigoted interests. Nevertheless, and now following the discursive line opened by the cultural materialist Raymond Williams with his recognition in *Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory* (1973) of some space if minimal for resistance within yet against the dominant culture, it must be acknowledged that some few 9/11 fictional works escaped from such prejudiced conventions and posited

alternative views to contextualize, and comprehend through fiction the 9/11 historical event.[19]

[19] Some of these few 9/11 works "against the grain" will be approached in the Conclusion of this project as a means to prove how certain resistance to such bigoted tendencies when representing 9/11 is possible.

PART II

MINIMAL PORTRAITS

Freedom itself was attacked this morning by a faceless coward.

> – President George W. Bush, "Remarks at Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana, on the Terrorist Attacks," September 11, 2001

The media representations of the faces of the "enemy" efface what is most human about the "face" for Levinas… Those who remain faceless or whose faces are presented to us as so many symbols of evil, authorize us to become senseless before those lives we have eradicated, and whose grievability is indefinitely postponed.

> – Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (2004)

Figure iii. Chip Bok, *Akron Beacon Journal*, 29 Nov. 2001.

Part II

Minimal Portraits

In the academic journal *Social Text*'s special issue on 9/11 titled "911: A Public Emergency?" (2002), Ahmad reported how Muslims, Arabs and Middle Easterners virtually disappeared off the streets of New York in the aftermath of 9/11 as a result of the "unrelenting, multivalent assault on their bodies, psyches and rights" consisting in, among other things, "restrictions on immigration of young men from Muslim countries, racial profiling and detention of 'Muslim-looking' individuals, and an epidemic of hate violence against Arab, Muslim, and South Asian communities" (Ahmad, 2002, p. 101). This disappearance off the streets is coincidentally echoed by 9/11 fiction: while the principal body of works which configures the corpus of 9/11 fictional creations is densely populated either by desolated White American widows or brave White firemen and policemen, the presence of colored people within these works is minimal; regarding the specific representation of Arabs and Muslims, in the few cases they appear, it is in the shoes of "evil" terrorists, which only serves to encourage and perpetuate through fiction the racial profiling techniques already applied in the streets both by the state armed forces and by the prejudiced, "frightened" population.

The following four chapters will address different scenarios in which such minimal presence becomes crucial in the ideological production of each story. Chapter Three "Ubiquitous Fictions…" explores two novels that exemplify a popular tendency in the way of narrating the 9/11 events through fiction which consists in introducing the reader into many different "real" stories occurred to the victims in various 9/11 key sites both inside the planes hijacked and the Twin Towers. Such novelized and totalizing versions of "reality", closer to compilations of tear-jerking

data than to the New Journalism style they unsuccessfully attempt to mimic, often pretend to reveal "the" unequivocal and authentic true "inside" of the events and inspire veracity on the grounds of their faked and privileged ubiquity. As it is always the victims' perspective which is portrayed in these works, the brief sketches of the hijackers also represented just serve to get them demonized and so reinforce by contrast the obvious extolment of the victims. The two specific novels that are approached in this chapter are Rubram Fernandez's *September 11 from the Inside* (2003) and Frank Senauth's *A Day of Terror: The Sagas of 11th September 2001* (2002).

Considering that the passengers and crew of the flight United Airlines 93 rebelled against the terrorists and almost took control of the plane, it is not surprising that the events aboard this particular plane have been the most re-visited by popular fictional works becoming one of the best – or rather, most effective – public spaces for heroizing the victims. Chapter Four "Plain Narratives…" precisely addresses three works which re-create the events aboard this concrete flight: Paul Greengrass's film *United 93* (2006), Peter Markle's Fox TV film *Flight 93* (2006), and Paul Chadwick's comic "Sacrifice" (2002). The comparative study of these works will be focused on the different narrative strategies adopted to vilify the terrorists while heroizing the victims, and on the works' different portraits of "religion," either presented as a quintessential element in relation to the 9/11 terrorist attacks, or as something completely irrelevant to them.

Chapter Five "Don DeLillo's disappointing novel *Falling Man*" explores how minimal the representation of the terrorist figure in DeLillo's 9/11 novel is, in comparison with the pivotal role played by terrorist characters throughout his former literary career. Although in *Falling Man* (2007) historical and fictional characters

interact to one another as it is usual in DeLillo's works, the novel's focus on a fictional couple of 9/11 traumatized survivors leaves too little room for the simplistic and stereotypical pictures that DeLillo sketches of the terrorists involved in the attacks.

Finally, Chapter Six "Aaron Sorkin and Chris Misiano's *The West Wing* TV Special Episode "Isaac and Ishmael": Indoctrinating Docile Patriots" approaches probably the first fictional, mainstream creation inspired on 9/11, as it was just a week after the attacks when the popular series *The West Wing* aired this specially made episode in which the fictional White House experiences a terrorist threat while it is visited by a guided tour of school children. Once again, the terrorists responsible for the presumed attack do not receive a "face" in the narrative, yet they are widely discussed and debated by different members of the fictional Administration. As Puar and Rai underlined in "Monster, Terrorist, Fag: The War on Terrorism and the Production of Docile Patriots" (2002), this particular episode of *The West Wing* benefited from the series' popularity to display popular actors indoctrinating the children in the episode – and the audience at home – with what patriotic Americans must do and think when facing terrorism "from abroad".

Chapter 3

Ubiquitous Fictions:

Rubram Fernández's novel *September 11 from the Inside* and

Frank Senauth's novel *A Day of Terror*

The vast majority of US fictional narratives dealing with the events of September 11, 2001, are a tribute to the victims, the survivors, and their "innate heroism". In very few cases, these same works either mention the hijackers or include short glimpses of them, yet these brief terrorist portraits mostly get them demonized, reproduce racial stereotypes, and basically operate as contrasting image to reinforce the "good" qualities – courage, innocence, solidarity… – of the protagonist victims and survivors. There is a pretentious trend of 9/11 fictional works that invests itself with the task of telling "the" truth of what happened that day, and whose principal strategy in order to assure the "veracity" of their stories consists in their faked "ubiquity," that is, in making the readers/spectators believe they have privileged access to all and every "inside" detail of 9/11 by re-creating different scenes both inside the buildings attacked as well as aboard the planes crashed. This chapter will explore some narrative mechanisms undertook by these fictions to present themselves as the quintessential 9/11 narratives while heroizing the victims and demonizing the terrorists in the process. Some of the aspects that will be addressed here are the "unliterary" arrangement of technical data, the question of the victims' and the terrorists' names, the issue of how to portray Arabic language, and specially the alleged motivations attached to the terrorists within these 9/11 fictions. The analysis of these features will be carried out through the interrogation of two 9/11 novels, Rubram Fernández's *September 11 from the Inside* (2003) and Frank Senauth's *A Day*

of Terror (2002), which perfectly exemplify the rhetorical argument "by ubiquity" referred above.

September 11 from the Inside re-creates how its author envisions the events that happened on 9/11 aboard the crashed flight American Airlines 11 and inside the upper floors of the World Trade Center. The first element that calls our attention in Fernández's novel is the pompous claim on its own wonders that is advanced in the Preface to the English edition. "This is the first *novel* written about September 11, 2001… This is not *another* book about 9/11, but this is *the book*. If everybody knew what this book contains, everybody would want to read it… Until now, it is the only book that relates the facts with a narrative approach…In ten years, all the essays and current events books about the subject will seem old and go out of fashion, but not this novel…" (Fernández, 2003, p. 1-2) [emphasis added by the author]. Considering that the novel was published two years after the attacks, and that this thesis analyzes precisely a selection of all those fictions dealing with the 9/11 events which adopted a narrative approach –some of them published within weeks after the attacks –, it seems quite suspicious if not false such self-promotion on the part of the author regarding his own work.

It results equally doubtful Fernández's reiterative assertion of the veracity of his account. Fernández remarks that the novel "covers all the 9/11 day" (p. 1), that "all the facts are true, even in the least details, because the book is the result of an investigation work" (p. 2), and that each "reconstruction has been made according to the truth" (p. 4). Fernández makes it clear also in the Preface that his novel "is based on firsthand accounts of dozens of survivors" (p. 4), and that the subheading "from the Inside" attempts to convey two meanings: that the story he tells is that of those "inside" the buildings, and that the narrative is told "from the perspective of the

victims" in order to put the reader "in the shoes of the persons who were on one of the planes or in the towers…who were gradually finding out the information, sometimes unaware of what was really happening... This is a literary work, a work of art, not a data compilation" (p. 1-5). If we believe Fernández's claim that it is "in the shoes" of the victims from where the narrative voices speak, I really find improbable that any of the passengers were familiar with all the non-literary data provided inside the novel, such as the fact that the American Airlines Flight 11 they were boarding was "a Boeing 767-223ER with two jet engines and a weight of almost 200 tons, including the 23,980 gallons of fuel stored in its wings" which "carried 81 passengers (from a total capacity of 245), two pilots and nine flight attendants" (p. 12).

In this respect, Fernández's emphasis within the Preface on the fact that his "narrative approach is not to anticipate anything, to show the events as they unfold, as they would be seen by someone from the inside, without adding external data that was found out at a later stage" (p. 5), directly contrasts with what is immediately put into practice inside his "work of art." Fernández's "not to anticipate" intention brings to the front the question of "unpredictability," something attempted yet mostly not achieved, not only by Fernández but by the immense majority of 9/11 fictional works partly due to the fatal denouement of the events on which these fictional works are inspired. It is each author's ability – or inability – to play with the readers' expectations what sometimes makes a difference in the quality of the result. In the case of Fernández's novel, I wonder what he meant by "not to anticipate anything" when he starts a chapter of his novel with "Like a snowball rolling down hill and getting bigger and bigger until it becomes an avalanche, the approaching tragedy started from the very beginning" (p. 15).

In close relation to this matter, it is also observable certain recurrence of ominous, foreshadowing elements both in Fernández's novel and in most 9/11 narratives that principally attempt to re-create the attacks rather than reflect upon them – not forgetting here that absolutely all 9/11 fictions entail an ideological reelaboration of the historical episode in the collective memory yet most of the times not so openly as primary goal –. Most of these ominous details basically appeal to the audience's/reader's emotions on the basis of their previous awareness of the actual, tragic outcome of the events narrated. In Fernández's *September 11 from the Inside*, the initial description of virtually every passenger or crew member oozes this pitiful "unavoidability," as the reader has access, for example, to how a passenger who almost missed the "doomed" flight reflects in the cab on his way to the airport on how "those appointments with his bosses were really exhausting for him," or how strong was "his desire to go home and see his wife and three daughters" (Fernández, 2003, p. 7). Other examples within Fernández's novel are the Captain's manifested plan "to take his wife to London on their wedding anniversary" (p. 13), or how the flight attendant's and former police officer decision to change her job "upset some of her relatives, as they considered, air travels more dangerous than police work" (p. 13), or another flight attendant who "was not originally scheduled to work on Flight 11" (p. 14). Without questioning the veracity of these specific circumstances, what I posit here is that the mere act of their mentioning over and over within the novel allows the domain of the anecdotic to enter into the emotional manipulation of the reader/spectator who is guided to "feel" sorry for the victims rather than to "think" on the attacks' possible causes.

With the same goal in mind, most 9/11 works' descriptions of passengers and crew follow a similar "emotionally-appealing" pattern. For example, in Fernández's

novel, when one of the crew members appears for the first time, the reader is informed of her age and her familiar status: "Katie, a 49-year old divorced mother of two children…" (p. 14). Such human portraits radically contrast with those of the terrorists, as when in the same novel one of the hijackers is described as

> … a young Arab-looking man, short, black hair and olive skin. His way of dressing made him go unnoticed… shirt with buttoned-up collar, trousers held up by an elegant belt and loafers… His attire could be summed up in one sentence he once heard: "Find ways to blend in with your opponent and control him." (p. 15)

Neither the flight attendant's race nor her complexion seems to have importance in the narrative, the same as the hijacker's familiar situation is left out to give priority instead to his Arab race, his olive skin and his mischievous, chameleonic virtues.

Besides these two contrasting tendencies when describing either the victims or the terrorists, there is another issue intrinsically related to them in which the differences between both constructed categories of human beings are also emphasized: the question of naming. Most 9/11 works that clearly pay tribute to the victims include their actual names as a way of honorable salutation. However, the terrorists' names are not so often included in the same narratives. For instance, of a total of 188 comics that I have had access to, all of them inspired on the 9/11 attacks, only one, Sid Jacobson and Ernie Colon's *The 9/11 Report: A Graphic Adaptation* (2006) contains the actual names of the terrorists.[20]

In the case of the novels and short stories dealing with the events of September 11, 2001, the terrorists' names only appear when the terrorists are the clear protagonists of the fictional work, and most of the times not even then. When the terrorists are presented as secondary figures, the only name that is sometimes mentioned is that of Mohammad Atta, the most frequently demonized character

[20] This comic, which is officially based on the governmental *9/11 Report*, and which notoriously stands out for its biased representation of Muslims and Arabs, is addressed in depth in Chapter Eleven.

within 9/11 fiction, more even than Osama Bin Laden. Finally, in the case of the audiovisual 9/11 production, the presence of the terrorists' names within the work is minimal and inversely proportional to the mainstream distribution of the film in question.

This generalized omission of the 9/11 terrorists' names within the corpus of 9/11 fiction serves to several purposes: it contrasts the status of the "victims" to be pitied or admired with that of the "terrorists" to be despised; it also minimizes the terrorists' identities emphasizing their "unnamable" non-human condition; and it usually acts as a measure to counter-attack a "supposedly" motivation for fame attributed to the terrorists. This last aspect becomes clear for example in Peter Gross' comic which introduces the reader into a tourist visit to the 9/11 site in Manhattan from a hypothetical United Earth 3258 A.D. A girl asks her mother during the visit: "Mama…who were the *bad* men?...why did they do it?" to what the mother answers "I don't know… we don't remember them. We only remember the *good* that people did afterwards" (Khan, 2002, p. 142-45) [emphasis added]. As it can be observed, the focus is removed from the causes of the September 11, 2001, attacks and their forgettable terrorists, and redirected towards the notorious false dichotomy of good vs. evil that was resurrected by President George W. Bush in his public addresses after 9/11.[21]

On this topic of including or not the actual names of both victims and terrorists, Fernández differs from the general line in some way and does not insert in his novel the actual names of the victims. The reasons to do that are explained by the author himself in the Preface, as he assures that "all the names of the *people* have been changed to protect the privacy of those involved" (Fernández, 2003, p. 7)

[21] The presence of President Bush's "good vs. evil" discourse within 9/11 fiction is unfortunately extensive. Chapter Ten analyzes one of the 9/11 fictional works in which such rhetoric has more influence, Stan Lee's comic *The Sleeping Giant*.

[emphasis added]. However, Fernández does not probably consider the terrorists as "people" because their names do not appear at all nor even changed in the novel: the terrorists in his work are not individually identified, and they are indistinguishably referred as "the hijacker" (p. 35) or "the man" (p. 15). According to the novel, the only terrorist character that is worthy of receiving "certain" individuality is Muhammad Atta, who can be distinguished from the other hijackers by the exhaustive reference of "the leader of the group" (p. 24).

After having discussed how the victims and the terrorists are so differently described and named, we can address the question of how their words are represented in fiction, especially how the Arabic language spoken by the hijackers is portrayed to English speaking audiences. This last issue is resolved in different ways depending on the medium and each author. In novels and short stories we can observe two main strategies: the first consists in making the hijackers speak English to one another, which leaves the original Arabic language out and unheard. In this case, it is not infrequent to find either mistranslations of Arabic expressions or more often invented monologues in English in which the depicted hijacker expresses an "attributed" fury, insanity and hatred for the American people. This strategy is employed for instance in Senauth's *A Day of Terror*, a novel that will be studied later on in this same chapter; the other possibility includes English transliterations of some Arabic "selected" words and some English translations of equally "selected" verses of the Koran which are inserted into these fictional works in order to give credibility to the artifice that it is the terrorists' voices which are being heard. Such Arabic transliterated words act as sort of Shlovskian defamiliarizing device creating in the readers the fallacy that they are allowed to access a new and different vocabulary/way of perceiving reality, the terrorists'. However, in most of the cases, these transliterations are the only linguistic

device employed by the author to make the reader recognize the terrorist character at the moment it appears, so at the end, such Arabic sounds immersed into perfectly well constructed English sentences reproduce the old stereotype of the exotic and mysterious Middle Easterner figure, a cliché firstly denounced by Edward Said in his inspiring *Orientalism* (1978) in relation to British and French canonical literary and non-literary texts. This transliterating mechanism is the one used for instance by John Updike in *Terrorist* (2006) and by Andre Dubus III in *The Garden of Last Days* (2008).[22]

As the representation of the 9/11 terrorists is almost minimal in comics, Arabic language is hardly found in this medium when it approaches the events of September 11, 2001. On the contrary, it is within those few yet popular 9/11 movies which re-created the events aboard the United 93 flight where Arabic words are heard and translated through subtitles to the audience allowing the terrorists to speak in their own language. However, we will see how the hijackers' words within these movies are subtitled or not at convenience, or even merely subtitled as "shouts in Arabic" when the film in question wants to impress on the spectator the panic and chaos that the passengers were suffering.[23]

In the case of Fernández's novel, the chosen method is that of direct translation. Therefore, the reader is offered an English translation of how the terrorists "exchange some words whispered in Arabic" like "Control your anxiety, everything is going according to the plan" (Fernández, 2003, p. 15), or "Check that you are carrying your knives and they are well sharpened. The slaughter has to be the least painful for the animal you are going to sacrifice" (p. 16). When the terrorists appear addressing the passengers, the text assures they spoke "good English, although with an Arabic

[22] Both novels are addressed individually and in depth in Chapters Seven and Nine, respectively.
[23] This question of random subtitles is addressed in depth in Chapter Four, as it specifically analyzes some of these Flight 93 fictions.

accent" (p. 15), as when they are said to shout "This will teach you to obey" (p. 22) or "Call your families and tell them you are going to die!" (p. 32). Not only the communicative verbs used to convey the terrorists' words in the novel are not neutral but tainted either with secrecy when they "whisper" or "mutter" to one another, or with wildness when they "shout" and "yell" at the passengers and crew. The novel also contradicts itself, for example, when it portrays the terrorists uttering "you are going to die!" (p. 32) just after the narrator remarks that "The real weapon of the hijackers were not the knives, but everybody's ignorance. If the passengers and the crew had known the hijackers' intentions…" (p. 27). This fact also contradicts the author's narrative approach of "not to anticipate anything (p. 5), and also betrays the author's commitment to tell "the facts from the victims' point of view who were gradually finding out the information" (p. 5).

Fernandez's novel is a clear tribute to the 9/11 victims like most 9/11 fictions, as it is indicated within Fernandez's Preface where the author assures that his novel is focused

> …on the people, the strength of the human being in extreme situations, their fortitude in adversity and the solidarity among strangers… This novel tells the victims' stories… They are touching accounts that reveal acts of heroism and solidarity, and are testimony of the strength of people… This novel is dedicated to all of them as a tribute." (p. 2-5)

This eulogy of the victims' strength as the work's final purpose is also confirmed inside the novel in the way the passengers' and the crew's actions are described, for example, when we can read how a flight attendant "began to feel scared inside, although, she showed herself completely different on the exterior, keeping a great strength and behaving firmly" (p. 17). However, what I do not see so clearly is the author's declaration in the Preface that the novel, in its tribute, is "a writing that

rebels against all the other publications about 9/11" (p. 2), when such approach is in fact the purest mainstream available in the market.

Returning to the few words that the terrorists are allowed to utter to one another inside these 9/11 fictions, they create the "appropriate" mysterious aura around the hijackers, yet most importantly, they convey the alleged "thoughts" attributed to them, which is precisely the imaginary space in which each author's opinions regarding the terrorists' motivations become clearer. It is this aspect of the terrorists' motivations for the attacks, and especially their suicidal condition, one of the elements related to the 9/11 terrorists which has received more attention from the media. When journalists and security experts discussed in public about this matter, Islamic issues were usually mixed up with a supposedly "passion for death" and a "fanatic pathological condition" on the terrorists' part. After 9/11, many Western artists felt compelled to reflect on the event in their works, and not a few of them devoted themselves to imagine what the terrorists thought and felt before committing the attack. However, as the terrorists died in the event, their personal motives cannot be fully retrievable. As Asad suggests in *On Suicide Bombing* (2007), this is the reason why these authors' recreations often "endow the dead terrorists with the motives of the living" (Asad, 2007, p. 45). Throughout this project we will observe how such westernist, conventional explanations of the suicide bomber do in fact tell us more about each author's "liberal assumptions of religious subjectivities and political violence" rather than they do about the terrorist act itself (Asad, 2007, p. 42).

The most recurrently attributed stereotypical motivations include: the seventy two virgins that jihadists are supposedly desperate to meet in Paradise, which emphasizes the image of terrorists as repressed sexual maniacs; the terrorists' incommensurable hatred for America, freedom, life, democracy, etc, a self-absorbed

strategy that not only places "us" in the center of the terrorists' minds, but which also presents America as the one and only synonym of freedom, life, and democracy; a supposedly passion for fame and popular recognition on the part of the terrorists, when it is actually within the American culture where such 15-minutes-of-fame motivation originated and finds its quintessential signification; and finally, personality fissures also related to this dying-for-fame phenomenon that vary from low self-esteem to deeper mental illnesses – terrorists as sick madmen – in those few cases where a psychological portrait of the terrorists as characters is offered.

Fernández's *September 11 From the Inside* seems a florid palette in which a mixture of all these mischievously attributed motivations can be observed: when the plane is approaching its target, one of the hijackers tries to calm another one reminding him "what in their creed… is waiting for us [the terrorists]: green fields…orchards full of fruits and beautiful virgins" (Fernández, 2003, p. 34), conveying the novel in such a way the equation of virgins as reward; on the terrorists' supposed "madness," the novel's narrator insists that the hijackers are not totally crazy, or at least "not crazy enough" as "their leader did not have a mental illness that disturbed him to the point of incapacitating him for flying a Boeing 767" (p. 35). In this case, it would be interesting to know what exactly the author considers to be "not crazy enough", or where he traces the line that separates sanity from insanity; then, the text follows introducing the reader to the supposed terrorists' "fame motivation," remarking how one of them considers that "by that action [he] would become something bigger than a hero" to be "remembered by his people" (p. 35); finally, the reader is offered how this same hijacker reflects that "those he was going to kill… were the enemies…because they lived in a country that had decided to live in freedom and democracy" (p. 35). This patriotic sentence that links the United States with

personal determination, life, freedom and democracy avoids any possible exercise of self-examination on the part of the reader towards the role of the US Government and its foreign policies in relation to the causes behind the September 11, 2001 attacks. The entire novel exudes this kind of blind patriotism, in spite of the author's manifest commitment to carry out "a serious work without personal opinions" (p. 2). The final "God Bless America" (p. 73) in capital letters that gives closure to the novel speaks by itself on the patriotic line the text hoists as banner (star-spangled?) throughout its self-declared objective: a "serious work without personal opinions" (p. 2), yet basically contradictory and biased in its representation of the 9/11 events.

The other 9/11 fictional work that will be studied in this chapter due to its similar pretended ubiquity is Frank Senauth's novel *A Day of Terror: The Sagas of 11th September 2001* (2002), which re-creates Senauth's vision of some events happened inside the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and in this case aboard all four planes hijacked and crashed that day. The protagonist, a young Canadian student in journalism called Rachel Woodhouse – the author himself, although born in Guyana, has lived in Canada since 1973 – wants to become one of Canada's best writers. In order to achieve such "modest" goal, Rachel introduces herself physically into the stories she writes about, and lives them herself thanks to some secret magic powers she was born with that allow her to travel in time and space. At the beginning of the novel, Rachel is asked by a professor of the University of Toronto to write an article on the events of September 11, 2001, so she uses her powers to do her research homework by reliving herself the events of that day inside significant sites as a passenger in the four planes, and as a WTC and Pentagon worker. The ubiquitous protagonist uses her magical powers as a medium to become one of the best Canadian writers because, as the narrator says, "She would be in all the stories she wrote, and

that's the only way her stories would become real to the whole world" (Senauth, 2002, p. 51). The author's strategic fallacy is clear: by introducing an observer into all these fictionally recreated sites, Senauth attempts to self-invest his work with a supposed objectivity, and tries to create in the reader the impression of getting a privileged access to the "truth" of the events of September 11, 2001. As Senauth himself assures in an introductory note to the novel, it is his intention to "tell it how it really happened in a simple and dramatic way… the public could see everything as it actually happened in a time of time" (p. 9). As in Fernández's novel, it is observable in Senauth's work similar totalizing pretensions of conveying "the" one and only veracity of how "everything" actually happened that day.

Observing some other Senauth's fictional works, it is obvious that Senauth shares his protagonist's writing aspirations and ubiquity: *A Cry for Help: The Fantastic Adventures of Elian Gonzalez* (2006), *Tsunami 2004* (2006), *Hurricane Katrina: the Worst Storm to Hit the Gulf* (2007) and *Hurricane Katrina Part Two: The Fantastic Adventures of the Scott's Family* (2007), *A Month of Terror: A Month of War Between the Israelis and The Hezbollah* (2007), *A Morning of Terror: The London Bombings on July 7th 2005* (2007), *To Save the Titanic from Disaster* (2007) and *To Save the Titanic from Disaster II* (2007) – in which Titanic II is prevented from meeting the same fate as its actual predecessor by a girl and a princess – , *The Collapse of the I-35w Mississippi River Bridge: Victims of the Dark* (2008), etc. Senauth seems aware of the fundamental role of fiction when revisiting and rewriting historical events. However, his prolific literary production, despite the fantastic element often present in it, lacks precisely certain literariness and literary quality, and most of the times it just offers recollected technical data in the guise of fiction. For example, in *A Day of Terror: The Sagas of 11th September 2001*, the reader is

introduced under the "supposed" perspective of the 18-year-old magical student to a full description of the first plane she boards on, American Airlines Flight 11:

> Rachel found herself seated in the middle of the jet. She gazed around and saw how wide was the jet. It carried 245 in three-classes interior – 20 first class, 50 business and 175 economy class or 304 in two classes. The configuration was 28 first class and 276 economy or 327 in all-economy. The length of the jet was 61,37 millimetre, height 16,87 millimetre, span 51,92 millimetre, wing area 290,7 square millimeter, cabin width 4,72 millimetre, cabin height 2,87 millimetre. Its speed was 149 to 375 knots on Pratt and Whitney engines or 62100 pounds. Rachel wished she was taking a vacation on this large aircraft…. (p. 59)

It is evident that what the reader has access to in this passage is not at all the protagonist's perspective, but a copied list of specialized data reproduced by the author in an encyclopedic style. Within the novel, she also inserts – not as tables of figures but as supposedly narrative discourse – much more technical information regarding the World Trade Center and Pentagon buildings, and the collisions, as well as full lists containing the names, ages, places of origin and jobs of all the passengers, flight attendants, pilots and terrorists of the four hijacked planes, and personal details of some of the WTC and Pentagon workers, firefighters, cops and emergency workers who died as a consequence of the attacks.

However, as it was observed in Fernández's novel, there are many differences inside Senauth's work regarding the way information is provided in these mentioned lists depending on the condition of hijacker or hijacked of the character introduced. In the case of the terrorists, most information about their identity is usually put into question through several devices that create an atmosphere of intrigue around their "blurred" personas: it is not indicated their place of origin but their nationality and place of residence, always preceded by the adverb "possible"; it is not provided their age but their date of birth, and always accompanied by the word "used", suggesting how they probably lied about it; and finally, it is always remarked how they faked

their identity pretending to be “pilots” or ordinary passengers. For example, in Senauth’s lists it can be read: “Mohamed Atta: Possible Egyptian national. Date of Birth used: September 1, 1968. Possible resident: Hollywood, Florida. Believed to be a pilot…” (Senauth, 2002, p. 63). Such way of presenting the hijackers’ details vividly contrasts with that of the passengers and crew, whose age, specific place of origin and profession is provided, for example, “Anna Allison, 48 years of age, of Stoneham, Massachusetts. She was the founder of Software Solutions…Myra Aronson, 52 years of age, of Charlestown, Massachusetts, was a press and analyst relations manager” (p. 63). Such mentioning of passengers’ and crew’s places of origin gives them roots and by comparison leaves the terrorists rootless, as not born inside a precise town or community but just coldly associated to a “possible” country. It is also remarkable that the only passenger of the four flights whose name is accompanied in the novel by the adjective of his nationality rather than the name of his place of origin is an Arab passenger from a Muslim country, “Waleed Joseph Iskandar… a *Lebanese* student...” (p. 65) [emphasis added]. In contrast with the hijackers who are said to just “use” a date of birth, it is the passengers’ ages which are usually provided, probably with the emotional intention of making the reader even pity more the victims’ loss and distinguish them from the “ageless” terrorists.

Senauth’s novel attempts to introduce the reader into the events that happened inside each of the four hijacked flights, so we will follow the same order here when analyzing in which ways his depictions of the terrorists of each flight adjust to real data. Regarding the first hijacked plane, American Airline Flight 11, the official 9/11 Commission Report assures that when the hijackers occupied the cockpit, they probably did not know how to operate the radio communication system and therefore broadcast the three following messages to the Boston Air Traffic Control Center

rather than to the passengers: At 8:24 “We have some planes. Just stay quiet, and you’ll be okay. We are returning to the airport”; some seconds later, “Nobody move. Everything will be okay. If you try to make any moves, you’ll endanger yourself and the airplane. Just stay quiet”; and finally at 8:34, “Nobody move please. We are going back to the airport. Don’t try to make any stupid moves” (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, 2004, p. 19*).* If we compare this recorded data with the words Senauth attributes to the terrorists in his novel, there are many differences in both the tone and the words employed. Here are some sentences Senauth assigns to Mohammad Atta:

> “You, American dogs, behave and you won’t get hurt…” – His eyes opened wide and there was a smile on his clean shaven face – “I am coming to meet you, towers of New York… Yes, my precious towers. Soon they would be no more… I am not going to reduce speed. I’ll increase speed. I want a big crash…I am coming you American dogs… I am coming to give you a taste of your own medicine. Soon you’ll be running for your lives. I will burn you alive and destroy your beautiful buildings… The American rats don’t know I am coming… coming to do them bodily harm and damage to their nice property. You can’t stop me American dogs. I win. Here I come.” (Senauth, 2002, p. 69, 74, 75)

It is astonishing how Senauth still maintains the thesis in his introductory note to the novel that “The public would read the stories as if they were there on each flight… and they could see everything as it actually happened” (p. 9). Senauth clearly invests the terrorist’s words with a supposedly irrational hatred for the American people. The point that I make here is not at all oriented to defend that the terrorists had good manners when they stabbed passengers, flight attendants, and crashed the planes into crowded buildings. The question is how the terrorists’ motives to perform the attacks are attributed by Western writers and artists according to their own beliefs and ideologies both preventing an understanding of the conflict and encouraging the wrong solutions to resolve it.

While Mohamed Atta is evidently demonized in Senauth's novel through an assigned blood thirsty tone as seen above, another terrorist of the same flight, Satam al Suqami, is presented as a complete stupid when he realizes in the middle of their mission that he will die at the end of it:

> "Yes, my precious towers. Soon they would be no more," Mohamed Atta said in his best English.
> "Yes, soon they would be no more," Satam said with a smile on his face, then he realised they would all have to die to accomplish that end, crashing the jet into the tower.
> "We are all going to die," Satam said. (p. 45)

Presenting all the terrorists as weak and stupid except Atta as the intelligent and evil one is another frequent and recurrent motif within the corpus of 9/11 fictional works. In Senauth's novel, this device is employed in several occasions, as for example when Atta tells Satam: "Well, Satam, you sit back and enjoy the flight of your life while it last. Let me do the flying and thinking" (p. 72).

In Senauth's novel, Atta is also attributed a blind devotion to Osama Bin Laden together with certain egomaniacal aspirations of fame and popularity: "Atta knew… he'd be a hero – a hero to the Muslim world, and especially to his real master, Osama Bin Laden, a man whom he admired and loved, and was going to die for" (p. 75). The Muslim world/word emerges here in Senauth's text inside Atta's mind in a free indirect style as "the" actual cause for which Atta aspires to be a hero. However, it is in the way some passengers in the novel perceive the terrorists where the terms "Muslim" and "Arab" – interchangeable synonyms in the novel – are most frequently used, usually accompanied by "negative" adjectives, as in "These Muslim men are brutes" (p. 73) or in " He opened his eyes only to see this disgusting Arab man over him" (p. 97). Towards the end of the novel, this tendency in referring to the terrorists by their creed or race also permeates the narrator who starts to refer to them

repeatedly as “the five Arab men,” “the Arab men,” or “the tall, slim Arab man” (p. 119, 121, 122, 123).

The novel is full of ominous premonitions on the part of several members of the crew of the planes hijacked, in the style of “I had this horrible dream last night… I dreamt we are going to crash” (p. 88), or “I nearly didn’t come to work today…I have this very terrible feeling we are all going to die” (p. 132). It seems that in Senauth’s novel the girl who travels in space and time to write her report on the 9/11 attacks is not the only one with magical powers. When the reader has some information that the characters ignore, in this case the fatal ending of the planes, the kind of suspense created is known as “threat.”[24] However, when obvious and repeated references are made by the “threatened” characters to this “threat,” as it is the case in Senatuh’s novel, the narratological device loses its desired effects and becomes reiterative and boring. Moreover, it is inside of these premonitions where Senauth ascribes racial prejudices to the planes’ crew more than once: In the first flight, one of the air hostesses called Karen wonders why a girl, the protagonist, has told her that she was going to investigate on her flight:

> Karen knew she would just have to wait and see what was going to happen on the flight. She had a funny feelings that it was something severe, and it all had to do with whoever was going to be on the jet. It had to do with the passengers. The passengers who were Arabs. She had no idea why she was thinking like that. (p. 61)

It is true that most people with racial prejudices neither realize it nor consider themselves as racists. In this case, the flight attendant’s “funny feelings” concerning the passengers who were Arabs include Waleed Joseph Iskandar, the Lebanese student who was visiting his family, in the same group as the terrorists.

[24] Alfred Hitchcock was a master of this “threat.” He was asked in a TV interview what suspense meant to him, and he answered by imagining a bomb with a big chronometer placed under the chair he was sat during the interview. Suspense was the perception of it, not by the people in the TV set but only by the audience. “There is no terror in the bang, only in the anticipation of it,” Hitchcock concluded. More about this interview in Halliwell, 1984.

Another example of racial prejudices ascribed to the crew can be found when Senauth recreates the events aboard American Airlines Flight 77. Senauth introduces the reader into a conversation between two flight attendants, Jennifer and Michele, who are commenting on the passengers before departing:

> "It was a nice set of passengers – but…" Jennifer said and stopped short.
> "But what?" Michele asked.
> "I really don't like those Arab men, four or five of them. I can't remember."
> "How do you know they were Arabs?"
> "I can tell from the color of their skin and their faces. I'll know them anywhere. I don't trust those people," Jennifer said as they walked back to the gallery.
> "Why don't you like them?" Michele asked curiously.
> "They are real trouble. They are terrorists. They are bombers. I don't like them on this aircraft – but they are customers. I know have to abide by the rules of the Airlines," Jennifer explained.
> "Do you think they are here to do harm?" Michele asked.
> "Something like that. I may be wrong, but I think they are here to do something to our aircraft," Jennifer said without thinking. (p. 115)

With this conversation, Senauth makes flight attendant Jennifer violate obviously "without thinking" most of the articles proclaimed in 1978 by the UNESCO in the *Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice*. She falls into racial prejudice, as Jennifer doesn't like these Arab men only because of the color of their skin, and also into racial profiling, as Jennifer doesn't "trust those people," and generalizes when equating "Arab" with "terrorists," "bombers," and "real trouble" – I wonder if American Airlines would have something to comment on this (dis)respect in case Senauth had documented his work and this conversation had a real base, which I honestly doubt –. Finally, Senauth also makes Jennifer violate the right to the presumption of innocence by making her assure that those Arab men were in the flight to do "something," to do "harm" – which although it proved to be true, her belief

should have been grounded on the terrorists' concrete actions and not on their darker skin and "faces" she would recognize "anywhere"–.[25]

Not only the flight attendants but the figure of the narrator itself encourages racial profiling through harder security measures in airports when it remarks that "these bad men… only there to do a job – cost it what it will, and they knew their job well, and were trained for years in many parts of the world as they were free to go to each country" (p. 95).

Throughout the novel, the narrator clearly identifies an "exacerbated hatred for Americans" as the principal cause behind the September 11, 2001, attacks. The novel is full of descriptions supporting this conclusion, like "They [terrorists] hated the Americans and they wanted to kill as many of them as possible" (p. 95). The author seems to share the same belief, as it is probed by the words Senauth attributes to the terrorists: "Wake up you, American pig," "I am coming you American dogs," or "Die Americans!" (p. 75, 97, 98).

In the case of the protagonist, the magical girl called Rachel Woodhouse whose homework serves as connecting link for the four stories inside the flights, she shares with the author her intention to "make to the whole world her investigation of the truth and nothing but the truth" (p. 115). Moreover, what both author and protagonists also share is certain stereotypical beliefs regarding Afghanistan. Employing the girl's magical powers, the author decides to put an end to this surreal novel by making her travel to Afghanistan to interview Osama Bin Laden. Senauth himself assures in the Introduction to the novel that "Afghanistan is a country of mystery and intrigue. A country where the people are poor and improvise" (p. 15). When the magic protagonist finally appears in a small village in Afghanistan, her

[25] See Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, UNESCO, *Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice*, adopted and proclaimed by the General Conference on November 27, 1978.

patronizing conclusions do not differ too much from Senauth's orientalist ones, as she shakes "her head from side to side in disbelief. The people were so poor – they didn't have much to live for and yet they were living in their own sweet way (p. 157). The interview between the girl and Bin Laden contrasts in content with the rest of novel, yet the approach and assumptions undertook appoint to the same direction:

> "Who are you, beautiful lady?" he asked in Arabic.
> "I am Rachel… I am from the future… You are a very fascinating man, Mr. Laden." Rachel told him in Arabic… "I am here on a special mission… People all over the world say you are a bad guy."
> "And what do you think, beautiful lady?" He asked with a smile.
> "I think you are a good guy, yet fully know that you are a bad person,"
> "I like the way you sum me up – bad, yet good. I never thought of myself that," he confessed.
> "All the people you just killed in United States. Why did you do it?"
> "It is all a game to me… It is my destiny to kill the American people…they seem to own everything that is good. I want to take some of those good things away from them. Make them suffer like we do,"
> …
> "I hope you know that the Americans will come after you… You have to escape…"
> When his aide touched him on the shoulder… "Osama, who are you speaking to?"
> "I can't remember speaking to anybody…We have to escape from here. The Americans are coming."
> Rachel…had done her duty. She had completed her mission. (p. 158-59)

Women interviewing/addressing Bin Laden, sometimes asking him for explanations, other times even falling in love with him, have been imagined more than once by some 9/11 authors like Chris Cleave in *Incendiary* (2006) or Helen Fielding in *Olivia Joules and the Overactive Imagination* (2004). These examples of Western women fascinated by the "notorious" Arab guy do not but reproduce the stereotype of the exotic and mysterious yet brute and mean Middle Eastern man.[26]

Regarding this Senauth's depiction of his protagonist interviewing Bin Laden, a meeting strategically placed at the end of the novel, it tries to provide a sort of

[26] Some contestation yet minimal to these omnipresent stereotypes can also be found following more feminist approaches within the corpus of 9/11 fictions, as it is the case of Claire Tristam's novel *After* (2004), which tells the story of an imagined president of the 9/11 widows association who has an affair with an Arab man a year after the attacks.

revelatory explanation for the September 11, 2001, attacks by supposedly offering the point of view of Bin Laden. However, the whole conversation is actually a sum of misinterpretations: firstly, the representation of Osama Bin Laden as if he were more in the line of Buddhism rather than of Islamic Fundamentalism; secondly, the childish judgment of Bin Laden as "bad, yet good" without any more explanations. It could be justified by the age of the protagonist, yet it is her perspective that the reader follows and identifies with throughout the whole novel. As she assures to offer "the truth and nothing but the truth," her evaluation of Bin Laden is the one intended to be conferred to the reader; thirdly, the reasons conveyed by the author to the fictional Bin Laden for the 9/11 attacks are the same exposed in other parts of the novel, that is, hatred for Americans, justified by the author in this case by a deep envy on Bin Laden's part for the Americans because "they seem to own everything that is good." Such statement seems a total promotion of the United States way of living on the part of the author, once again without offering a single word on former and continuous United States belligerent foreign policies and campaigns in the Middle East; and finally, the surreal help provided by the girl to Bin Laden in order to not being captured, which mirrors the author's inclusion of Bin Laden's fictional voice at the end of his novel. This last device just serves the goal of providing the reader with the artificial impression that Senauth's novel even contains Bin Laden himself explaining his motivations to organize and perpetrate the 9/11 attacks, when it is in fact Senauth's unilateral vision the one represented in all the characters of his novel. The faked presence of Bin Laden's thoughts and words within the novel agrees then with the work's principal strategy of arguing "ubiquity" as synonym of "authenticity."

In sum, both Fernández's *September 11 From the Inside* and Senauth's *A Day of Terror: The Sagas of September 11th 2001* represent a literary tendency when

revisiting the events of September 11, 2001, in fiction: a re-creation of the events which pretends to be objective in its account of the attacks on the basis of its supposed ground on testimonies and official data. In order to reinforce their own authoritative status of “the” only true version of the 9/11 events in each case, these works employ the narrative strategy of ubiquity by introducing the readers into key moments and places within the day of the attacks. However, as we have observed here, the representation of 9/11 carried out by these works is not at all unbiased, especially when the terrorists and their motivations to perpetrate the attacks are depicted as a medium to hoist American patriotism.

Chapter 4

"Plain" Narratives:

Paul Greengrass's film *United 93*, Peter Markle's FOX TV Film *Flight 93*, and Paul Chadwick's comic "Sacrifice"

There is a small group of 9/11 fictional works that specifically re-create the events aboard the only commercial plane hijacked that day which did not reach its target, the United Airlines flight 93 which crashed into a field in Shankville, Pennsylvania. This set of fictional pieces that have particularly addressed what "probably" happened inside this concrete plane are very "replicative" like the ones addressed in Chapter Three, in the sense that their principal goal is also to enact the incidents that took place inside just one plane in this case, in the "supposedly" closest way to what "actually" happened, following the dictates of an "alleged" objectivity. However, in contrast with the formerly approached re-creational works, these particular Flight 93 fictions resulted among the most popular ones within the corpus of 9/11 fictional works due to the open confrontation that the passengers and crew of this flight started against the hijackers when the former attempted to retake the control of the plane hijacked. It is this courageous behavior on the part of the hijacked passengers and crew what is exhibited within these fictions in which the ideological and discursive transformation of "the 9/11 victims" into "the 9/11 heroes" finds its most authentic meaning. Some of these works are the film by Paul Greengrass *United 93* (2006), the Fox TV film *Flight 93* (2006) directed by Peter Markle, and the comic "Sacrifice" (2002) created by Paul Chadwick They constitute an obvious tribute to the 9/11 victims, heroic narratives also populated by some minor yet pivotal figures, the terrorists, whose minimal and biased representation inside these works will be approached in this chapter.

It is very interesting that the three different opening scenes of these selected works reveal a lot regarding the narrative and ideological strategies undertaken by each of them throughout their respective stories. For example, Paul Greengrass's *United 93* starts with Ziad Jarrah, the terrorist who will fly the plane, praying in Arabic in a motel room until another terrorist tells him in Arabic with English subtitles "Ziad, it's time." This scene appears even before the credits of "Universal Pictures presents… United 93." Then, with a soundtrack of recitations of the Koran, another terrorist is shown shaving his body while the rest pray on their knees. They hung each other, leave their motel and in their way to the airport a sign on the road reads "God save America". It is this juxtaposition of religious creeds and the omnipresence of religion what will be the stamp of this film.

On the contrary, the Fox TV Film *Flight 93* opens with Leroy Homer, the co-pilot of United Airlines 93 flight, putting on his uniform and kissing his wife and newborn child before leaving home. Immediately after this scene, the terrorist Ziad is shown shaving his face and chest, accompanied by a "mysterious" Islamic tune. Then, in the waiting room in the airport, the film shows a female passenger, whom we know that is pregnant because she is reading the book *What to expect when you are expecting*, and after that image, the terrorists are shown appearing in the airport, again accompanied by that "mysterious" Islamic music. The stamp of this TV film *Flight 93* is precisely its long shots of the victims' families, especially children, that increase the spectators' pity for the victims, as well as the films' faked attempt to offer an equal representation of passengers and terrorists, as if "parallel" were a synonym of "unbiased". The falseness of these supposedly impartial portraits gets revealed by details like the "threatening" music that can be heard every time the terrorists are on the screen.

On its part, Chadwick’s comic “Sacrifice” starts with an image of the World Trade Center in flames accompanied by the text: “The nightmare was already underway…but for some, the price they were to pay was yet to come. They were to make what can only be called a heroic Sacrifice” (Richardson, 2002, p. 15) (see fig. 4.1).

Figure 4.1.

The terrorists in this story appear minimally at the end, and the principal ideological device of the comic consists in heroizing the passengers to the point of elevating them to martyrs. As the title of the work “sacrifice” suggests, the message promoted by the story is that the passengers tried to retake the control of the plane, not to save their own lives, but as a philanthropic deed to avoid the deaths of those people inside the building against which the plane was supposedly to be crashed.

Regarding the question of mentioning or not the names of the terrorists, which implies giving them or not a “human” identity, in *United 93*, their names appear subtitled every time they talk to one another. Even the name of Muhammad Atta, the terrorist pilot who crashed the first plane against the North Tower, appears written in subtitles when his message “We have some planes” is received by the Boston Air

Traffic Control Center. In *Flight 93*, in its fake pretension of equal treatment, the names of the terrorists and some passengers can be read when several close-ups are made of their boarding cards before getting on the plane. Again, this supposedly unbiased treatment vanishes when, at the end of the film, a complete list of the names of crew and passengers is displayed as a tribute to them. In "Sacrifice," the passengers are introduced by their names, ages, professions, and in some cases, by "courageous" features which probe their strength, like "Beamer, a former football player," "Glick, the judo champion," or the most surreal of all of them: "Bingham… recently run with the bulls in Pamplona, Spain" (p. 17). None of the names of the terrorists appear in this comic.

Concerning the presence of the Arabic language spoken by the terrorists, both *United 93* and *Flight 93* employ English subtitles when the terrorists talk to one another. However, both films at one point stop subtitling the terrorists especially when the terrorists address the passengers in Arabic. In the case of *Flight 93*, when this occurs, the subtitles sometimes simply read "Shouts in Arabic." It becomes clear as both films advance that the purpose of this "selective subtitling" is to introduce the audience into the passengers' tension on board, at the – intentional – cost of, from then on, presenting the events only through the passengers' perspective. The passengers and crew members' panic increased by their absolute misunderstanding of the chaotic situation is conveyed to the spectator by neither translating nor subtitling at times the terrorists' words. However, this device reproduces the stereotype of the Arabic man as someone difficult to be understood, who simply display incomprehensible and untranslatable shouts. It needs not saying that in the comic "Sacrifice," not a single word in Arabic is written.

On how the terrorists are perceived by other characters within these works, in *United 93,* when Atta’s phrase “We have some planes” is heard at the Boston Air Center, the traffic controller tells his superior: “I heard some voice. It was not American. It was foreign,” as if having an accent logically equated not being American. To this respect, he could have perfectly said “It was not a white American” or “It was not an all-American born and breed” and the intended meaning would not be much different. In *Flight 93*, it is a passenger who, speaking to his wife on the phone, tells her: “Some *very bad* men on board. There’s three of them. *Middle Eastern looking*, maybe *Iranian*” (emphasis added). Again, it is the passengers’ perspective of the events which is presented to the audience, and in this case, the passenger’s prejudices because none of the 19 hijackers was Iranian. I do not deny that these could have been the specific words employed by the passenger, because after all, what we know about what happened inside the plane comes from the victims’ families and their phone conversations. However, it is the task of the director and the scriptwriters to “select” among all those conversations that took place, which ones are part of the final narrative. Especially when that “Middle Eastern looking” that the passenger refers to was responsible for an intense wave of racial crimes against Arabs, Muslims and whoever “looked like” Middle Easterner in the weeks after 9/11. Accordingly, exactly the same can be said on the “very badness” of the men that the passenger alludes, which reminds too much in its simplicity to the “evilness” that President Bush ascribed to the terrorists in his public discourses after the attacks.

In spite of the passengers’ predominant perspective, both films show at times – the few – what could be considered the terrorists’ view. *United 93* even portrays them in situations – again, the minimal – which, let us say, do not demonize them

"completely." For instance, the film shows the terrorist Zaid calling from the waiting area in the airport to someone and telling her – it was his ex-girlfriend – "*Ich liebe dich*," "I love you" in German, which the film subtitles in English.[27] Another "human(e)" trait that the *United 93* concedes to the terrorists is when they allow an EMT and later two air hostess to approach the cockpit to help the passenger who had been stabbed at the beginning of the hijacking. *Flight 93* on its part, do not humanize the terrorists to such extent, yet at one point it introduces the audience into Ziad's mind as it presents him having a flashback that shows him studying to be a pilot.

In "Sacrifice," it is not the passengers but the narrator who refers to the terrorists, and only to emphasize the contrast the comic creates between the terrorists and the passengers. In the last vignette, the text says referring to the passengers: "They weren't brainwashed to expect virgins feeding them sweets in the afterlife. They had families, loved ones" (p. 18). This last remark which deprives the terrorists of family and loved ones, and which therefore dehumanizes them, clearly contrasts with the *Ich liebe dich* message that only appears in *United 93*.

Regarding the mentioned "brainwashing" and the "virgins" question, we can analyze which role "religion" performs in each of these three 9/11 aerial narratives. In "Sacrifice," the only comment about the terrorists in the whole story labels them as stupid for being brainwashed with the promise of sexual and food pleasures. This portrait of the terrorists as sexually repressed and lustful perverts will be very common in many 9/11 works as a way to introduce the Western reader/spectator into the terrorists' possible motivations for the attacks. Most of the times, it is the writers/directors who depict the terrorists with these traits who probably project their

[27] Within the entire corpus of 9/11 works, this love call from one of the terrorists just appears in this film and in Antonia Bird's docudrama *The Hamburg Cell*, which tracks Zaid's adherence to the terrorist cause.

own irreligious vision of life onto the terrorists, and then promote the idea that the terrorists’ Islamic creed is merely based upon sexual satisfaction in the afterlife.

In *United 93*, on the contrary, true faith in whichever fashion occupies a pivotal role in the story, which does not mean that the film exonerates fervent religious faith from any guilt. The film starts with the terrorists praying, and recitations of Koran serve as initial soundtrack. When they leave the motel and in their way to the airport, there’s a close up of a street sign saying “God bless America”, as I referred above. This religious overlapping will be constant throughout the whole film. Another example can be found when the terrorists stabbed one of the air hostesses. “We should kill her,” tells one terrorist to the pilot terrorist in Arabic. While the terrorist kills her, he says: “In the name of God,” and the pilot terrorist says: “Lord to you I have submitted myself. Given you my faith. On you I depend.” Immediately after this prayer, the film shows a shot of a passenger crying: “Jesus Christ!” Therefore, the film portrays the terrorists with a true faith, and not just the terrorists, but the crew and the passengers’ creeds are equally important, as it is emphasized through these sudden shifts from one shot of the terrorists reciting to another of the passengers praying, from one religion to another. The most obvious example is almost at the end of the film, when the Lord’s Prayer is recited by different passengers while the terrorists also recite verses from the Koran.

This permanent and correlative relationship that *United 93* establishes between both the terrorists’ and the passengers’ creeds can be interpreted in multiple ways, which makes the question much more interesting. Firstly, it definitely creates a common point, their faith, between both parts, hijackers and hijacked, and therefore humanizes the terrorists in certain way. It also remarks the sometimes forgotten omnipresence of religion nowadays, for good or for ill. One of the academic

consequences of the 9/11 attacks was the rise of religious studies and departments at universities all over the United States. There also seems to have taken place a shift in the kind of questions asked within these studies: from the former epistemological study of religion *per se* and its axioms in different creeds, to a more comparative and ontological inquiring about what roles religions perform in twenty-first century societies, or what is to be gained or lost by religious faith at all. In relation to the 9/11 attacks, one of the most common issues the academia has approached is the dangers of religions, of all of them, and especially the monotheist ones. Some examples of this renovated anticlerical interest are: Hitchens' best-seller *God is not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* (2007), in which all the damage that religion has caused throughout history is examined; Dawkins' *The God Delusion* (2006), in which both roots and wrongs of religions are eloquently explored; and Harris' *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror and The Future of Reason* (2004), which exposes to what extent the idea of civilizations is in danger precisely due to religions. It must be said that this anti-religion academic manifestations emerged as a reaction against what was described as a "resurgence of religious faith in the aftermath of September 11, 2001," which according to the editors of journals such as *First Things*, it might be the "start of a religious awakening" (Bottum, 2001). Nevertheless, as Hauerwas and Lentricchia remarked as editors of the *South Atlantic Quarterly*'s special issue on 9/11, this alleged post-9/11 religious "awakening" was not spontaneous at all: "God and country are back. However, the Bush Administration wants it both ways. They want America to be "religious" (Hauerwas and Lentricchia, 2003, p. 249). I personally support both academics when they conclude that "Religious faith is dangerous. Jew, Muslim, and Christian know that there is much worth dying for. Faiths constituted by convictions worth for dying for can also become faiths worth killing for" (p. 250).

Taking up again the analysis of the omnipresence of religious faith in *United 93*, it can be concluded that the film seems to represent religion both in its best and worse traits, that is, either as a place to find spiritual refuge and peace before dying, or as a motivation to crash a commercial plane full of passengers against a crowded building. Although *United 93* portrays the terrorists as true believers and links them is some way with the victims under the common umbrella of religious faith, the film cannot help associating Islam with the terrorists, and Christianity and Judaism with the victims-heroes, that is, Islam with the “violent” religion worth killing for, and Christianity and Judaism with the “peaceful” refuge.

Nevertheless, the approach that *United 93* makes towards Islamic religion is completely different and much less prejudiced than the one undertaken by the Fox TV film *Flight 93*. This last movie, instead of shifting from the terrorists’ to the passengers’ prays, clearly distinguishes a hierarchy between one creed, that of the passengers – all Christians according to the film –, and the other religion portrayed, Islam, that of the “crazy” terrorists. One of the film’s climaxes is the moment in which one of the passengers recites the complete Lord’s Prayer, doxology included, with the woman he is talking on the phone.[28] In the film, the passengers, and not the terrorists, are the ones who have a real faith, and Christianity is presented as “the” religion.

In this respect, the comic “Sacrifice” just mentions how one of the passengers “asked the operator to recite with him the twenty-third psalm or possibly the Lord’s Prayer – reports vary” (Richardson, 2002, p. 16). If Chadwick, the comic’s author, is right and there is no agreement on which of each Christian prayers was recited by the passenger and the woman on the phone, it results revealing how both films *United 93*

[28] A doxology is a short hymn of praises to God often added to the end of canticles and pslams in Christian services. The doxology that is sometimes added at the end of Lord’s Prayer is “For yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever, Amen.”

and *Flight 93* have opted for the much more known Lord's Prayer, and how they have turned that "uncertain" praying moment in which "reports vary" into a fundamental climax in both narratives. Under a pretended presentation of the supposedly "objective" events occurred in the planes lays to what extent simple data can be manipulated in both works in order to convey the intended message. To conclude with this issue of how religion is approached by these three stories which narrate the events that happened on the same hijacked flight, it is remarkable how such approach is carried out in so different ways in each work: from the omnipresence and frequent comparison of the hijackers' and the passengers' creeds in *United 93*, to the promotion of Christianity as the "good" faith in *Flight 93*, and to the pseudo-secular yet Islamic disrespectful view in the comic "Sacrifice."

These three narratives do not only differ from one another in the role they assign to religion within their respective stories. If we focus on other narratological elements, we can observed from slight differences as well as fundamental ones. Among the first, there is the question of "unavoidability" already addressed in Chapter Three, and which is related to the fact that the reader/spectator knows in advance the fatal denouement of each fictional recreation. In this respect, *United 93* shows crew members and passengers elaborating plans for their future that the audience knows they will not be successfully carried out. Some instances are: the first officer and the captain having a conversation about some days off they are trying to get from the company; two flight attendants commenting that one of them has got "a crush on that maintenance man"; One passenger is shown arriving late, and the flight attendant tells him: "You just made it"; another flight attendant appears telling her colleague: "I like to be home with my babies"; a group of passengers are depicted planning their trip on a map and talking about the hotel reservations they have in each

location; the captain tells the first officer about his plans of taking his wife to London for their anniversary; etc. Apart from providing a sense of daily ordinariness, all these snapshots both complete the picture of how so many lives were instantly cut by the terrorist attack, and are the vehicle to address the same narratological and ideological goal: to move the spectators’ emotions towards pitying the victims. The conversation between two maintenance men that is recreated in the film is even more ominous: “– Did you get the word about putting some extra fuel? – Yeah, yeah, doing it now.” The film also includes two long shots of how fuel is being filled into the plane’s tank. In this case, the aim of these long shots is clearly to increase the spectator’s sense of threat and catastrophe also grounded on their previous knowledge of the consequences of that extra amount of fuel when the plane eventually crashed.

Flight 93, although including identical conversations among crew and passengers like the captain’s plan to travel to London, differs from *United 93* in the sense that *Flight 93* also portrays the victims’ families and friends in their distressing wait for news and calls from their loved ones. Indeed, the focus is especially placed on the victims’ children. This tendency is present in the very first scene of the film, when the first officer is shown putting on his uniform, and the next shot shows his baby placidly sleeping. As I referred before, this film also includes a pregnant passenger reading *What to Expect When You Are Expecting* while she waits at the departure lounge before boarding. Another example of this focus on the victims’ children occurs when one of the flight attendants tells her colleague: “I took someone else’s shift. My husband almost divorced me over it… Begged me to stay home and got mad when I didn’t… Well, I want to be home for my son’s first birthday.” When the hijacked passengers call their families, in contrast with *United 93*, *Flight 93* also includes shots of their families on the phone. One last example is when a cop calls at

the door of one of the passenger's home, and a child is shown asking her mother: "Is that daddy, mommy?" While *United 93* is more focused on the events "inside" the plane and in different air traffic control centers, the FOX TV production bets on the victims' families and especially their children to move even more the spectators' emotions towards pitying the victims. In this respect, the comic "Sacrifice" also includes one vignette of one of the hijacked passengers' wife surrounded by kids while talking on the phone with her husband.

Concerning how the heroism of passengers and crew members is reinforced in each film, besides the obvious confrontation between the hijacked and the terrorists which is present in the three narratives, each narrative employs different strategies, sometimes subtle, other times evident, to remark the courage and resolution of the victims. *United 93*, for instance, shows the terrorist pilot placing a picture of the Capitol on the plane dashboard, and later on, a defence officer in command from the National Headquarters talking on the phone to the President: "We are not gonna able to protect the Capitol… We have two F-16s out of Selfridge… I understand it's a commercial airliner, sir. There will be casualties. But what… Think about what happens if they hit the ground. Think of what… If they hit the Capitol, sir, may we engage?" This is the indirect way in which the film underlines how the crew and passengers' brave revolt against the hijackers actually prevented the plane crashing into the Capitol, which would have brought about much more casualties. *Flight 93*, on the contrary, portrays the passengers' courage as incited by their loved ones, as when the film shows the conversation between a passenger and his wife:

> Jeremy: We're gonna vote soon. Are they gonna blow up this plane?
> Lyz: I don't think so.
> Jeremy: Should we retake the plane?
> Lyz: No guns?
> Jeremy: They would have showed them to us.
> Lyz: I think you should do it.

This conversation is immediately followed by another long shot of the first officer’s baby sleeping. Again, the FOX production seems to give a special importance to the victims’ families, in this case, as a pivotal element in stimulating their loved ones into action. A note at the end of the TV film points out how “With great courage and resolve, the passengers and crew of Flight 93 prevented their plane from reaching its likely target, the White House or the Capitol Building. The film is dedicated to the passengers and crew of Flight 93, and to their families,” after which, a list of the names of the victims is shown on the screen.

It is the comic “Sacrifice” which mostly emphasizes and ennobles the heroism of crew and passengers of United Airlines Flight 93, perhaps due to the natural inclination of the comic medium to depict the deeds of heroes and evildoers as principal plot. Firstly, the passengers are described with supposedly brave traits as if these personal features were some sort of supernatural gifts or powers. As it was mentioned before, these features vary from being a Judo champion to having “recently run with the bulls in Pamplona, Spain” (Richardson, 2002, p. 16) (see fig. 4.2).

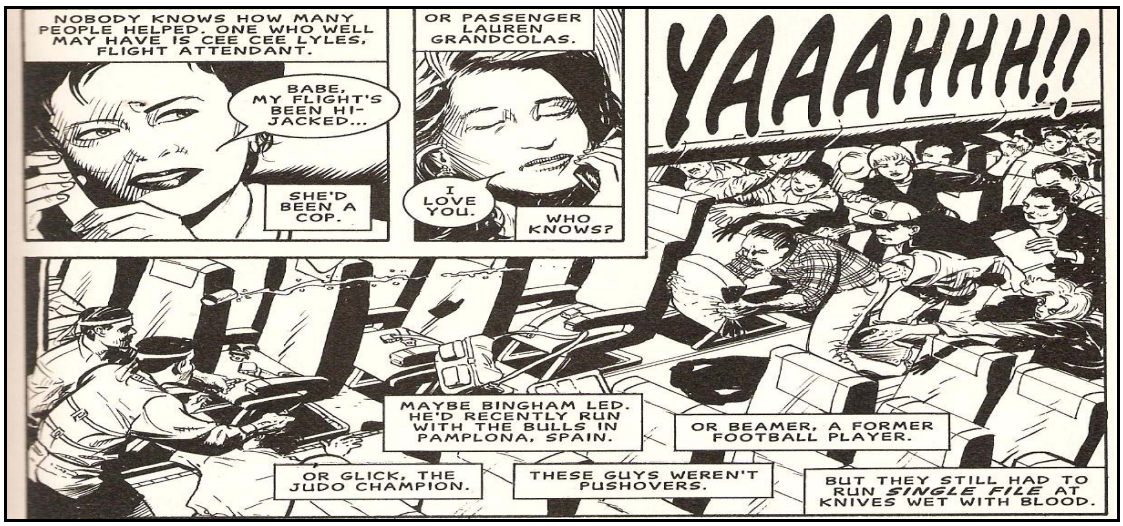


Figure 4.2.

Later on, the text remarks how the passengers saved "many, many more lives than were lost on that plane" (p. 17), which I do not doubt. However, the comic's dramatic effect is when it concludes in the most extreme demagogic way that the passengers were "willing to die to save others... we know the plane was headed for Washington… [the crew and passengers] were very courageous when they made that decision… They did the hard, correct thing. I salute them" (p. 18) (see fig. 4.3 and 4.4).

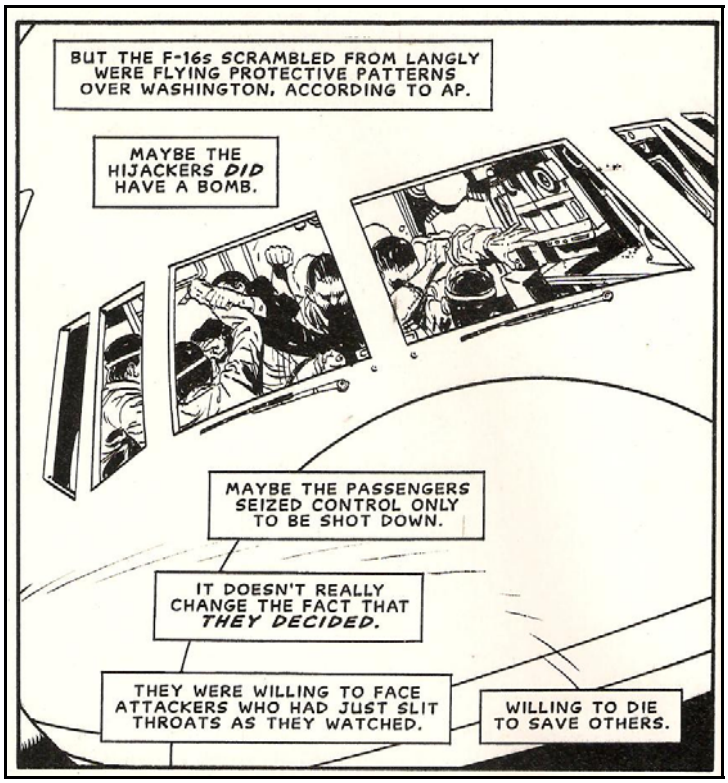


Figure 4.3.

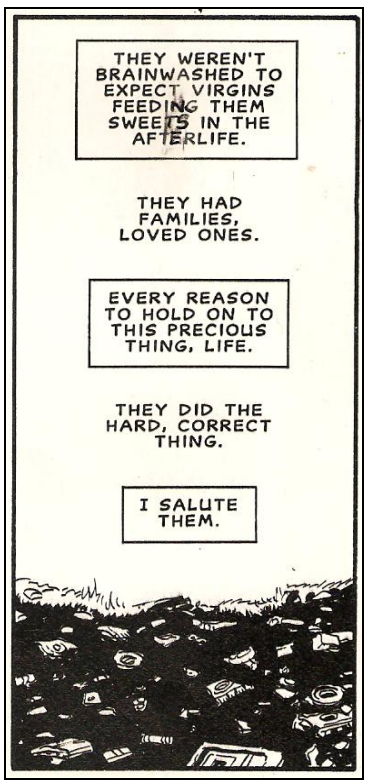


Figure 4.4.

The comic directly argues that the crew and passengers decided to confront the terrorists only to save the lives of others, and not a single word in the comic indicates any intention for their own survival. Even the title of the comic, "Sacrifice," runs in this same direction of presenting the crew and passengers' heroic deed as totally unselfish, while it was their own lives and the confirmation on the part of their

families that it was a suicide attack what most probably inspired them to counterattack and revolt against the hijackers.

If extolling the crew and passengers’ heroism seems the principal aim of the comic “Sacrifice,” the main focus of *United 93* is placed on allotting – rather freeing authorities from – responsibilities for the plane’s crash besides the terrorists’ actions. The film vividly remarks how the crew and flight attendants did their job correctly, as when it shows the pilot telling the flight attendant at the beginning of the film the code of that day to enter the cockpit: three quick knocks followed by one single one. It is also showed a flight attendant performing the security regular pieces of advice to the passengers before landing off. When two of the terrorists point a knife to the attendant and tell her “Open the door. Open the door and nobody will be hurt,” she still refuses to do it. After that, she is stabbed while the terrorist says “In the name of God,” in consonance with the film’s omnipresence of religion already underlined. Eventually it is another flight attendant who, after seeing how her colleague has been stabbed, performs the agreed password-knocking and allows the terrorists to enter into the cockpit.

United 93 also exculpates the Air Traffic Control Center in Boston from any responsibility, as the film shows one of the controllers hearing and informing his superior about Atta’s message “Just be quiet and you’ll be Ok. We are returning to the airport.” The film also depicts the New York Air Traffic Center when confirming and alerting that “they have another hijack: United 175.” However, the most ostensibly exonerated part in the film regarding the plane’s final crash results the United States Government, which is represented by the actions recreated inside the National Military Headquarters in Virginia. The film portrays one Virginia officer listening to the recorded messages from the planes for several times until he realizes and alerts his

superiors that Atta's words referred to "some planes" in plural. The film also shows the officer in charge in Virginia assuring: "I got two F16s ready to turn and burn toward Washington… Yet I need rules of engagement. We have no shoot-down authority. Shoot-down authority comes from the President and the President only." When the Pentagon is hit, the film shows how Virginia Headquarters ordered all civilian flights over America to land: "This is a national emergency. Everyone land, regardless of destination. We're gonna shut down the entire country right now." *United 93* closes showing the passengers entering into the cockpit yet too late, when the plane is too close to the land. The film includes this final note on the screen:

> Of the four hijacked that day, United 93 was the only that did not reach its target. It crashed near Shankville, Pennsylvania at 10.03am. No one survived.
>
> Military commanders were not notified that United 93 had been hijacked until four minutes after it had crashed. The nearest fighter jets were 100 miles away.
>
> At 10.18am, the President authorized the military to engage hijacked aircraft. Fearing an accidental shoot down, military commanders chose not to pass the order to pilot in the air.
>
> By 12:06pm, every civilian airliner over America had been forced to land. Amidst an unprecedented military mobilization, US airspace was closed until further notice…"

In summary, the note attempts to leave absolutely no doubt about the absence of military intervention regarding the plane's crash. One of the most overspread conspiracy theories about the 9/11 attacks assured that United 93 had been shot down by the military. The film's final note attempts to negate this theory by stating how the President authorized the military to engage fifteen minutes after the plane crashed, or underlining that even in possession of the presidential authorization, the military commanders in charge did not pass the order. The note also extols the efficiency of both military forces in their "unprecedented" deployment and air traffic controllers in their making all civilian airliners flying over America land in less than two hours.

If the final aim of *United 93* is basically to clear the military of any responsibility, it is very interesting to observe how the FOX TV film *Flight 93* insistently exonerates the air company United Airlines. Besides showing the flight attendants’ resistance to allow the terrorists enter into the cockpit, *Flight 93* also depicts how the cockpit received the following message from United Airlines “Beware cockpit intrusions. 2 A/C [aircrafts] hit the World Trade Center.” The film also includes images of the United Airlines Crisis Center at Chicago confirming the message and doing their best when in such emergency situation. On the contrary, according to this film, it is the cops and the FBI who did not come off very well in the hard situation, as it occurs when the wife of one of the passengers, after being reported by her husband about the hijacking, is shown calling 911 and being transferred twice until she reaches an FBI agent who asks her: “I’m sorry madam. Can you clarify?” This same woman is later on visited by two cops, and while they are in the garden, she receives a second call from her husband, and she tells him: “Authorities don’t know anything about your plane.”

However, the clearest aspect that reveals the ideological aim of the film gets exposed by the kind of news cast in the TV sets which are depicted inside the victims’ families’ homes. It is not a coincidence that a film expressly made for TV includes TV sets on and casting news regarding the attacks. The first time that TV news appears in the film, it can be heard a commentator assuring: “What comes to me is Pearl Harbor, but the casualties here, sadly, could be greater.” Later on, another TV set appears referring again to Pearl Harbor: “You could go back to Pearl Harbor but we really don’t know if it’s over. This is an entirely different kind of thing. So far three planes…” Therefore, there are two references to Pearl Harbor in the film, that is, two calls to the spectator to relate 9/11 to a former “war” situation, and both of them

insinuating that it is even much worse now than then. The film's final ideological thrust is carried out at the end, when flight 93 has already crashed and a TV set is shown offering as conclusion:

> This will take a massive effort to rebuild New York, one of our greatest cities. As you know, New Yorkers have that ability to pull them together at times like this. This city will rebuild, and no doubt new towers will be constructed. I would assume there will be a response, a military response, to these events.

Had not the Pearl Harbor references been enough clear, through this final TV message the FOX film reveals its warmongering principal intention. Apart from reasserting the audience both inside and outside the film about New York's capacity to overcome the attacks, the film deliberately demands a military response which actually did not lasted too much, as in less than a month it started the costly – in both lives and money – War in Afghanistan that today in 2010 still goes on.

On the question of allotting responsibilities besides the terrorists, the comic "Sacrifice" is the only one of the three works that questions the official version that the plane United 93 was not shot down by the United States military forces. The text in the comic reads:

> A caller from a restroom said he heard an explosion and saw white smoke "coming from the aircraft"— according to one report — and "in the cabin" according to another. Some have speculated the plane was shot down. President Bush *had* authorized shoot-downs by this time. But the F-16s scrambled from Langly were flying protective patterns over Washington, according to AP. Maybe the hijackers *did* have a bomb. Maybe the passengers seized control only to be shot down. It doesn't really change the fact that *they decided*. They were willing to face attackers who had just slit throats as they watched. Willing to die to save others. (Richardson, 2002, p. 18) (See fig. 4.3)

As it can be observed in this passage, the comic neither advocates the shoot-down conspiracy theory, nor rejects it, a quite very different stance from the approach undertook by both cinematographic and mainstream versions of the same events. On the one hand, it is not surprising to observe such a traditionally independent medium as it is the comic in support of side stream theories like the conspiracy ones. On the

other hand, the comic’s assertion that President Bush had already authorized shoot-downs before the crash clearly contrasts with the film *United 93* when confirming the contrary. This fact denotes either disinformation on the part of the comic’s author, or to what extent the recollected data concerning that day have been manipulated in order to suit each author’s/director’s interests.

In conclusion, this chapter has been focused on the analysis of how the events occurred aboard the same hijacked plane were so differently portrayed by three 9/11 narratives, each attending to different interests. Paul Greengrass’s film *United 93* argues for the military forces’ innocence regarding the plane’s crash, while it also emphasizes the importance and omnipresence of “religion” in the world today. The FOX TV film *Flight 93*, on the contrary, advocates for Christianity and the concept of family as the pillars on which post-9/11 America should be re-built, while dangerously calls for military retaliation as the most appropriate response to 9/11. Finally, Paul Chadwick’s comic “Sacrifice” questions the official version of the non-military engagement to shoot down the plane, while it argues that the passengers and crew of flight 93 revolted against the hijackers only to save others’ lives and not their own. The two only principal common elements shared by these three fictional works are the tribute that the three of them pay to the victims, whose heroization extols American patriotism and reinforces by contrast the demonization of the 9/11 terrorists, and the stereotyping picture of Arabs, Muslims, and Middle Easterners so maliciously conveyed to the Western reader/spectator as if the mere act of belonging to a race, creed, or nationality were the unequivocal synonym of being a potential mass murderer.

Chapter 5

Don DeLillo's "disappointing" novel *Falling Man*

There was a high sense of expectancy, and not only within the literary world, the day that Don DeLillo released his 9/11 novel *Falling Man* (2007). Such excitement was partly due to DeLillo's commitment with "fictional" terrorism throughout his entire literary career. Indeed, as the *New York Times* "official" literary critic Michiko Kakutani underlined, DeLillo's novels "not only limned the surreal weirdness of the waning years of the twentieth century, but somehow also managed to anticipate the shock and horror of 9/11" (Kakutani, 2007). Therefore, before approaching the analysis of *Falling Man*, it seems mandatory to briefly introduce here some of his novels which so well re-imagined terrorism and the twentieth century while pointing at the new millennium.

DeLillo's interest in exploring the interaction among reality, fiction and the contemporary world through precisely fictional works started at the very beginning of his career. His first novel, *Americana* (1971), explores film's power to misrepresent reality, as it narrates the story of a former television executive who decides to make an autobiographical movie. It is in DeLillo's fifth novel, *Players* (1977), where the topic of terrorism emerges with force, as it narrates how the lives of a conventional couple of New Yorker brokers turn from boredom to chaos as one of them gets recruited by a terrorist organization. It is in this novel where the Twin Towers appear for the first time in DeLillo's oeuvre, as one of its protagonists works for a firm located in the World Trade Center.

More than a decade later, DeLillo directly enters into the historical rewriting genre with *Libra* (1988), a novel that revisits JFK's assassination plot from the perspective of Lee Harvey Oswald, the novel's protagonist and principal narrator. In

DeLillo's version of the political murder, Kennedy's assassination was plotted by former CIA agents, yet it was intended to fail as a way to instigate the United States Government to declare war to Cuba. The greatest asset in the novel is DeLillo's immersion both into Oswald's mind and into the artificiality and "constructedness" of the historical discourse in general and the official version of JFK's murder in particular.[29]

Three years later, in his eleventh novel *Mao II* (1991), DeLillo approaches again the topic of terrorism as primary theme in the story of a writer who, unable to finish his novel, ends up speaking on behalf and eventually negotiating the release of another writer who had been taken as hostage in Lebanon by an international terrorist organization. It is very interesting the comparative reflections upon terror and art that are carried out in this novel through its protagonist the fictional writer Bill Gray. According to this character, terrorism has supplanted art as the "raids of consciousness" that impact and transform culture on a large scale. Gray laments that terrorists have annexed the territory that once belonged to the novelist, which is the ability to "alter the inner life of a culture." To Gray, "news of disaster is the only narrative people need," and "the darker the news, the grander the narrative" (DeLillo, 1991, p. 42).

Underworld (1997), usually considered DeLillo's *chef d'oeuvre*, tells the non-linear story of an American unconventional family and how they respond from the fifties through the nineties to historical events including the Cuban Missile Crisis and nuclear proliferation. Historical figures like J. Edgar Hoover interact with the fictional

[29] Don DeLillo's *Libra* is the work that inspired my MA Thesis in 2006 "The latent construction of historical discourse by the media, and its patent rewriting in the postmodern movement: application to the discourse of JFK's murder." ("*La construcción latente del discurso histórico por los medios de comunicación y su re-escritura patente en el movimiento postmoderno: aplicación al discurso del asesinato de JFK*.") It was focused on the analysis of the mutually constructing nature of history and fiction as evidenced in the fictional re-writings of John F. Kennedy's murder.

protagonists inside this work whose title refers to supposed radioactive waste buried deep underground. In this novel, which so brilliantly captures the American experience of the Cold War era, there is also room for the Twin Towers both on the cover of the novel's first edition and as a referential point inside the narrative, as when one of the characters who works at the Waste Containment

> ...is standing next to a mountain of trash at the Fresh Kills landfill site on Staten Island: He imagined he was watching the construction of the Great Pyramid at Giza —only this was twenty-five times bigger, with tanker trucks spraying perfumed water on the approach roads. He found the sight inspiring. All this ingenuity and labor, this delicate effort to fit maximum waste into diminishing space. The towers of the World Trade Center were visible in the distance and he sensed a poetic balance between that idea and this one. (DeLillo, 1997, p. 184)

Before such literary curriculum, one might wonder what DeLillo himself has declared concerning the topics of terrorism and the writing of history and fiction whose blurred boundaries are so well put into question within his fictional production. On the relationship between terror and the act of writing, DeLillo stated in an interview published around the time of *Mao II* that

> A writer can be deeply influential, but in a society that's filled with glut and repetition and endless consumption, the act of terror may be the only meaningful act… People who are powerless make an open theatre of violence. True terror is a language and a vision. There is a deep narrative structure to terrorist acts and they infiltrate and alter consciousness in ways that writers used to aspire to. (DeLillo, 1991; O'Hagan, 2007)

More recently, immediately after the 9/11 attacks, DeLillo wrote a celebrated non-fictional essay for *Harper's* magazine titled "In the Ruins of the Future," in which he wondered what the task of writers was when facing tragic events. DeLillo assured that the official narrative

> …ends in the rubble and it is left to us to create the counternarrative… People running for their lives are part of the story that is left to us… they take us beyond the hard numbers of dead and missing and give us a glimpse of elevated being... [9/11] cannot be bent to the mercies of analogy or simile. Primal terror — the cellphones, the lost shoes, the handkerchiefs mashed in the faces of running men and women — has to take precedence over politics,

> history and religion. There is something empty in the sky… The writer tries to give memory, tenderness and meaning to all that howling space. (DeLillo, 2001)

There is one single aspect in which I disagree with Kakutani's demolishing review of DeLillo's *Fallling Man* for the *New York Times*. Kakutani remarks that "not enough time has passed for any novelist to put the events of that day and its shuddering consequences into historical perspective without being eclipsed by the documentary testimony (from newspaper articles, television footage and still photographs) still freshly seared in readers' minds" (Kakutani, 2007). On the contrary, I strongly belief in DeLillo's premise that it is the task of the writer of fiction to create the "counternarrative" to the events, and no matter how much documentary testimony exist, fiction has the immense power to have access to other inside elements of fundamental importance to the public understanding of the event itself. During an interview to DeLillo on May 2007 conducted by Gerald Marzorati, I had the enormous fortune to be allowed to ask personally to Mr. DeLillo on this respect, exactly on what role did 9/11 films and novels fulfil in relation to their non-fictional counterparts. DeLillo's answer to my question was inspired as well as inspiring:

> We will always have the videotape recordings. While journalists write the first draft of history, fiction writes the final draft of it, because fiction can enter the unknown. A fictional narrative can trace how the terrorists think, what they dream… The novel and film have access in this interior way. Writers enter the unconsciousness at will. (Marzorati, 2007)

In view of such wise conception of fiction, history, and with an entire career behind him of literary exploration of terrorism, it is understandable the already mentioned expectation that was generated when DeLillo presented his fifteenth novel *Falling Man* (2007), the "counternarrative" that "in principle" consummated his literary response to the 9/11 attacks. The disappointment could not be higher.

Let us start saying what *Falling Man* is not. It is not *Libra*, certainly. On how the official historical discourse – 9/11 in *Falling Man* and JFK's murder in *Libra* – is revisited and rewritten in both novels, DeLillo in *Libra* "enacted wonders the Warren Commission could never have imagined" as Andrew O'Hagan remarks in the *New York Review of Books*. But *Falling Man* is "a distillation of fear and grief over real-life drama next to which the 9/11 Commission Report reads serenely and beautiful… *Falling Man* pushes the book towards silliness" (O'Hagan, 2007).

Falling Man is not *Underworld* either, definitively. In *Falling Man*, there is virtually no interaction of fictional with historical figures. The only names of actual people that appear minimally in the novel are "Bill Lawton," the phonetic approximation of Bin Laden, whose "planes" are searched in the sky by some post-9/11 traumatized kids with their binoculars, and Mohammed Atta, who else, and who appears minimally. As Frank Rich underlines in the *New York Sunday Review of Books*, "with the exception of Mohammed Atta, who slips into the crevices of *Falling Man* as an almost spectral presence, DeLillo mentions none of the other boldface names of 9/11, not even the mayor" (Rich, 2007). On this same issue, O'Hagan for the *New York Review of Books* remarks that "the reader indeed will find himself knowing Atta only as a distinguished absence, present everywhere but visible nowhere" (O'Hagan, 2007).

Nevertheless, let us focus for a moment on DeLillo's representation of Mohammed Atta. Besides minimal – saying that the "spectral presence" and "distinguished absence" of Mohammed Atta is "outlined" in the novel is too much saying –, his portrait is stereotypical. In the few lines in which fictional Atta appears, he is shown either lecturing his terrorist mates on Islam as the struggle against Jews and Americans (DeLillo, 2007, p. 80), or scolding them for "eating all the time,"

showing idleness when approaching their prayers or "being with shameless women" (p. 82). Although Atta is described by one of his colleagues in the novel as a reflexive individual, always "in the upper skies, making sense of things, drawing things together" (p. 81), his strictness and stiffness makes of him a despicable figure in the novel both to his mates and the reader.

There are two brief sections of the novel which are narrated under the perspective of a fictional 9/11 terrorist, Hammad. Considering the first hardcover Scribner edition of the novel, these passages occurred between the pages 77 and 83, when Hammad narrates his staying in Hamburg at the cell in Marienstrasse, and between the pages 237 and 239, when Hammad is on the plane he and his terrorist mates have already hijacked. Out of a total of 248 pages, the terrorist view is offered in just eight. Yet much more important than the small quantity, it is the poor and superficial content these pages convey. According to Rich in the *New York Sunday Review of Books*, "these brief interruptions seem potted, adding little beyond mellifluous writing to the journalist record" (Rich, 2007). Indeed, the word that best catches the essence of the portrait of Hammad carried out inside these "brief interruptions" is "stereotype." The Marienstrasse passage opens with Hammad talking with an old veteran of the Iran-Iraq War who describes to Hammad how children then, armed with Kalashnikovs, were there "to fall and die" in the name of the Ayatollah while "wearing keys to Paradise around their necks… Ten thousand boys enacting the glory of self-sacrifice to divert Iraqi troops and equipment from the real army massing behind front lines" (DeLillo, 2007, p. 78). The simile is clear: Islamic terrorists are also just boys manipulated by their countries' leaders who convince them to die with religious promises. When Hammad tells his mates about his chat with the old man, they "talked him down. That was a long time ago, and those were

only boys, they said, not worth the time it would take to be sorry for a single one" (p. 78). Therefore, they are portrayed as children yet heartless after all.

Then, Hammad is depicted thinking on the possibility that "another woman would come by on a bike, someone to look at, hair wet, legs pumping" (p. 78). And later that night, "he [Hammad] had to step over the prone form of a brother in prayer as he made his way to the toilet to jerk off" (p. 80). The "conveniently" overspread image of the Islamic terrorist as a sexual obsessed emerges here in plain view, accompanied this time by the suitable dose of male chauvinism when one of Hammad's friends is shown remarking how he "avoided contact with women and dogs" (p. 80). Vanity is another feature assigned to Hammad, as he is twice portrayed spending time "at the mirror, looking at his beard, knowing he was not supposed to trim it" (p. 82). Therefore, it is the stereotype of the terrorist obsessively attracted by women and the physical world the one which gets sketched in the figure of Hammad. For the rest of his mates, it is basically Anti-Semite talk and the corrupt West which occupies their conversations and minds within the passage.

Regarding the terrorists' motivations to perpetrate the attacks, different causes are insinuated in the novel, all of them already trite by the news media. The first uttered by Hammad is the fear that Islam got shivered "down to bread crumbs for birds… crowded out by other cultures, other futures, the all-enfolding will of capital markets and foreign policies" (p. 79-80). The insanity of the hijackers and their psychological dysfunctions emerge more subtly, as when Hammad exposes his lack of identity outside his group. The Koran is portrayed in the novel encouraging to "be determined to become one mind…Shed everything but the men you are with. Become each other's running blood" (p. 83). Even Hammad remarks how "his friends gave him a reason to be mysterious, a circumstance she [Leyla, the woman with whom

Hammad lays sometimes] found interesting" (p. 82). In fact, this is the only radically new yet absurd motivation that displays the novel: practice the jihad to look more interesting to women.

In the second and final passage narrated by the terrorist aboard the plane, Islam as religious brainwashing emerges again as possible motivation for the attacks while the metaphor of the Iran-Iraq boys gets completed. When Hammad was supposed

> ... to patrol the aisle, box cutter in hand… he thought of the Shia boys on the battlefield… boys in the hundreds, then the thousands, suicide brigades, wearing red bandannas around their necks and plastic keys underneath, to open the door to paradise… Every sin of your life is forgiven in the seconds to come. There is nothing between you and eternal life in then seconds to come. You are wishing for death and now it is here in the seconds to come. (p. 237-239)

Hammad is portrayed repeating to himself the mantras learned by heart when facing the imminent crash, as if convincing himself in the way he was once convinced to die – and kill – for a "supposed" eternal life, exactly like the Shia boys he recalls in his last minute of life.

Perhaps the most interesting paragraph in the novel occurs at the moment of the crash, when "he" in free indirect style shifts in the same paragraph from Hammad on the plane a second before the explosion, to Keith – the survivor protagonist – in his office at the World Trade Center a second after the explosion. Nevertheless, this stylish change of focalizor does not make up for the conventional portrait of the terrorist figure carried out throughout these two analyzed "brief interruptions" Hammad is allowed to narrate. Certainly, not the "counternarrative to 9/11" expected, but mainstream stereotypes regarding the hijackers' male chauvinism, sexual obsessions, and personality fissures like their alleged lack of individual identity are the elements briefly traced within those eight mentioned pages. Nothing comparable

to DeLillo's former fiction, neither what his splendid non-fictional essay in *Harper's Magazine* anticipated. As Kakutani underlines in her review of *Falling Man* for the *New York Times*,

> Although flashes of Mr. DeLillo's extraordinary gifts for language can be found in his depiction of the surreal events Keith witnessed on 9/11 — passages that remind the reader of the harrowing essay he published in Harper's Magazine in December 2001 — the remainder of the novel feels tired and brittle… The sketchy portrait of one of the hijackers pales next to the carefully observed portraits that appeared in the Los Angeles Times reporter Terry McDermott's 2005 book, *Perfect Soldiers*. (Kakutani, 2007)

After having approached here what the novel is not and what it does not portray, that is, an original approach to the 9/11 terrorist figure, it could be of interest to address what other characters DeLillo has chosen to inhabiting the remaining 240 pages of his novel. The plot of *Falling Man* is quite simple: the first half of the novel tells the story of a recently separated guy called Keith who escapes from the World Trade Center with the wrong briefcase in his hands, and days after, after having made up with his wife Liane, he decides to look for the briefcase's owner who turns out to be a woman, Florence, with whom he has an affair. In the second half of the book, Keith, missing two of his weekly-poker-game friends who died in the attacks, leaves his family behind and goes to Las Vegas to play poker indefinitely. The novel attempts to explore the idea of trauma in the figure of Keith and how he must eventually recall the events of that day to overcome his shock. The narrative voice is conducted through Keith's unfocused gaze in those passages he appears. However, I agree with Kakutani when she remarks that

> Keith emerges from such passages as a pathetic, adolescent-minded creature. Yes, of course, he suffered trauma and shock. Yes, of course, his life was irrevocably altered by 9/11, but so, too, were the lives of thousands of other people (almost none of whose voices are heard in this novel) — people more grievously injured than Keith, people who didn't react by leaving home and work to pursue a mindless round of anodyne games in Vegas. (Kakutani, 2007)

The female protagonist of the novel is Liane, Keith's ex-wife with whom he returns the same day of the attacks, and whose perspective of the events can also be accessed at times through free indirect style. She works as a tutor in a therapeutic journal-writing class with Alzheimer's patients who serve as Greek chorus to her repressed emotions. Both Keith's and Liane's respective traumas are redundantly approached in the novel. Indeed, DeLillo "makes no effort to situate these two very self-absorbed characters within a larger mosaic of what happened that September morning" (Kakutani, 2007).

Other minor presences in the novel, yet larger than the terrorist ones, are: Florence Givens, the woman and also 9/11 survivor with whom Keith has an affair; Nina, Liane's mother; and Martin, Nina's boyfriend, a European art dealer who observes the 9/11 attacks with certain emotional detachment due to his former engagement with an undetermined European terrorist group in the seventies. It is the figure of Martin a controversial one, not totally understood by the critics of the novel. For example, O'Hagan writes on the character of Martin:

> "We're all sick of America and Americans," he [Martin] says at one point. "The subject nauseates us." But Martin is a nullity: Who could care about him and his little European pieties on the state of the world and the politics of art? Is he a terrorist? Who cares, he's a goon… When Martin speaks we sometimes imagine he could be speaking for DeLillo. "Nothing seems exaggerated anymore," he says. "Nothing amazes me." (O'Hagan, 2007)

On this same character of Martin, Kakutani underlines how he thinks the 9/11 hijackers "have something in common with the radicals of the sixties and seventies... He thinks they're all part of the same classical pattern. They have their theorists. They have their visions of world brotherhood" (Kakutani, 2007).

In this fictional Martin's detachment, it is not actually DeLillo's cold disengagement what can be heard but some European intellectuals' who fearing the consequences of 9/11 on geopolitics were brave enough to express their disapproval

of President Bush's belligerent plans, opposition that most Americans were not able to articulate in the immediate wake of the attacks but did later on. In fact, it is remarkable how President Bush enjoyed the approval rating of 90 percent – the highest of any American President – on October 2001, and how he left office on January 2009 as the most unpopular departing president in history with the final approval rating of 22 percent, and with 73 percent of Americans confirming that they "disapprove of the way Mr. Bush has handled his job as president over the last eight years," according to the official CBS News/New York Times polls (Frankovic, 2009).

One of these referred European academics who opposed President Bush's post-9/11 contentious discourse was Jean Baudrillard, who days after the attacks, published in *Le Monde* one of the boldest analyses of the 9/11 event. In "The Spirit of Terrorism," Baudrillard argued that the entire world was complicit in the fall of the Twin Towers, as they were the symbol of the centralization of power in the hands of the United States. According to Baudrillard, we all wanted 9/11 to happen, "we all dreamed with seeing great symbols of American wealth come crashing down," as it is "natural" that everyone wished for that centralized power to come down (Baudrillard, 2002, p. 5). Some weeks after the attacks, Baudrillard gave a lecture at Washington Square Park in New York, which was sonorously unwelcomed by the attendants with boos and whistles.

My reference here to Baudrillard's polemic essay must not be understood as any form of praise for it. It is true that it defied the assumptions of the United States society at a significant moment in which independent thinking seemed to have been also hijacked not by Islamic terrorists this time but by American fundamentalist conservatives. However, the content of Baudrillard's essay does actually establish categorical divisions equating good with liberal democracy and evil with communism

and Islam, emulating in fact President Bush's post 9/11 dichotomical discourse – either you are with us or you are with the terrorists –.[30] My recalling here of Baudrillard responds to the possible connection between his and the nature of Martin's intellectual yet detached answer to 9/11. Indeed, DeLillo is very familiar to Baudrillard's philosophy. Not in vain DeLillo's novel *White Noise* (1985), depicting how the simulation of a nuclear catastrophe ends up replacing reality, is usually understood as the fictional counterpart to Baudrillard's theoretical work *Simulacra and Simulation* (1985), in which he discusses the interaction between reality, symbols, and society. Although both postmodern thinkers may have shared once a post-structuralist approach to how mass media influence and do create reality at their will, it seems that *Falling Man*, and especially the portrayed figure of the European intellectual detached from real suffering, makes evident DeLillo's current distance from his former friend's beliefs, at least on what 9/11 concerns.

One of the most powerful final images that the novel leaves the reader with is that of a New York performance artist who re-enacts the fall of the bodies from the burning World Trade Center. It is the character of Liane who accidentally finds twice this artist's street spectacle in which a man, in suit and with briefcase included, leaves himself fall from NY bridges and buildings only to be finally held by a safety harness, remaining there, hanging headfirst for as much time as he is allowed before the police arrives. The novel also portrays different meanings this artist is attached to, as for instance, when a "fictional" New School panel discussion cannot decide whether he is a "Heartless Exhibitionist" or a "Brave New Chronicler of the Age of Terror" (DeLillo, 2007, p. 220). As Rich remarks in his review of *Falling Man*, this fictional

[30] Baudrillard's essay "The Spirit of Terrorism" is approached in depth in Chapter Seven when discussing John Updike's novel *Terrorist*, because both works, yet through non-fiction and fiction, respectively, postulate similar equations that link the concept of "good" with the West and "evil" with Islam.

artist's performance "touches the third rail of 9/11 taboos. In *Falling Man*, as in life, no one wants to watch a re-enactment of the Associated Press photo of a man falling headfirst from the north tower – an image that was largely pulled from circulation after 9/12" (Rich, 2007). In fact, it is coincidentally "falling man" the appellative that was assigned to this unknown man who jumped from the North Tower to avoid the flames and who was captured in the polemic snapshot. Perhaps to break that self-imposed censorship concerning the dramatic picture, at least two 9/11 documentary films have specifically been dedicated to determine the identity of this individual. However, it cannot be denied that certain interest in benefiting from the audience's morbidity may also be at the bottom of such documentaries. During the already mentioned Marzorati's interview to DeLillo on May 2007, DeLillo himself acknowledged this coincidence and recognized his ignorance concerning this actual falling man and his assigned name upon which DeLillo's novel has by chance been also titled. Indeed, it is the fictional performance artist who gives name to DeLillo's novel the most outstanding element in it, precisely for being a metafictional symbol of how 9/11 is artistically represented within the novel.

Nevertheless, such interesting meta-representation does not save the novel from the general disappointment it caused on those familiarized with DeLillo's *oeuvre*. O'Hagan, in the *New York Review of Books*, remarks *à propos* of the "real" falling man that he "is currently awaiting a writer sufficiently uncoerced by the politics of art to tell his story," concluding that *Falling Man*, the novel, is not still "the" 9/11 expected novel at all: "DeLillo's failure in *Falling Man* to imagine September 11" leaves the reader with the feeling that "DeLillo's formerly superlative intuition has become a form of ignorante" (O'Hagan, 2007). Kakutani, in the *New York Times* also expresses her disenchantment with DeLillo's 9/11 work:

> The reader approaches Mr. DeLillo's post- 9/11 work with great anticipation. Unfortunately, his strangely stilted 2003 novel, "Cosmopolis," was a terrible disappointment, and so is his spindly new novel, "Falling Man." … "Falling Man" feels small and unsatisfying and inadequate… Instead of capturing the impact of 9/11 on the country or New York or a spectrum of survivors or even a couple of interesting individuals, instead of illuminating the zeitgeist in which 9/11 occurred or the shell-shocked world it left in its wake, Mr. DeLillo leaves us with two paltry images: one of a performance artist re-enacting the fall of bodies from the burning World Trade Center, and one of a self-absorbed man, who came through the fire and ash of that day and decided to spend his foreseeable future playing stupid card games in the Nevada desert. (Kakutani, 2007)

DeLillo's failure in *Falling Man* at reflecting the impact of the 9/11 events on a country or a generation contrasts with what he had previously and successfully achieved in *Underworld* concerning the Cold War era. Not the 9/11 expected novel at all, especially from Mr. DeLillo. Certainly, a disappointment.

Chapter 6

Aaron Sorkin (Scriptwriter) and Chris Misiano's (Director) *The West Wing* Special Episode "Isaac and Ishmael": Indoctrinating Docile Patriots

It should not surprise anybody that the first mainstream 9/11 fictional narrative was produced by the television medium. It was television which firstly created the 9/11 official discourse due to its quintessential quickness on getting to the news, and it also worked twenty four seven to elaborate from the very beginning what so many Americans stuck to their TV sets had to think in regards to the 9/11 attacks. At first, the non-fictional TV production overwhelmed its counterpart fictional one: telethons with movie and TV stars asking for donations, debates with experts in terrorism now turned into TV stars too, documentaries with unprecedented images and impossible angle shots of the moment of the crash... However, when some time passed and American people had to come back to their daily lives, more imaginative approaches to the event were required to not repeat the same footage/content but retain the high rates of audience achieved. On October 3, 2001, not a month after 9/11, the third season of the TV series *The West Wing* opened yet not with the first episode already created for that purpose but with a different one, "Isaac and Ishmael," specially written and filmed in just two weeks in the wake of the terrorist attacks of September 11th.

The West Wing is a popular serial drama created by Aaron Sorkin, produced by Warner Bros. Television, and whose first season started to be broadcast on NBC on September 1999. The series is set in the West Wing of the White House – where the Oval Office and offices of presidential senior staff are located – during the fictional Democratic administration of Josiah Bartlet, played by Martin Sheen. *The West Wing*

stretches storylines over several episodes, yet each episode also contains smaller arcs which usually begin and end within the episode. Most episodes follow President Bartlet and his staff through their day, generally following several plots connected by some idea or theme related to particular legislative or political issues. In its first season, *The West Wing* garnered nine Emmy awards including that for Outstanding Drama Series, a record for most won by a series in its first season that eclipsed former marks held by *ER* and *High Street Blues*. The first season was followed by 13 million viewers on average, a record beaten by the series' second season with an average of 17 million viewers. Altogether seven seasons of *The West Wing* were filmed and aired between 1999 and 2006, achieving the total of 27 Emmy Awards within this period including those for Outstanding Drama Series in 2000, 2001, 2002, and 2003, ranking the fourth all-time in number of Emmy Awards won by a series.

The third season of *The West Wing* was programmed to open on October 10, 2001. Very few days after the 9/11 attacks, Aaron Sorkin, the series' creator, wrote a special "episode cero" as a response to the attacks, and within two weeks the series' crew and cast filmed it. This special episode that was titled "Isaac and Ishmael" was aired on October 3, 2001, a week before the day that the third season was originally programmed to open. The episode was followed by 25.2 million viewers (Pfefferman, 2001) ranking the seventh most seen TV program of the year according to Nielsen Net Ratings.

"Isaac and Ishmael" opens with the main cast introducing the episode out of character. The actors and actresses of the series inform the audience about the substitution of the original opening episode, which would be aired the following week, by this one specially created in the wake of 9/11. They also observe that instead of the title sequence, phone numbers will appear on the screen to ask for donations to

groups that help with victims' assistance. Then, the fictional narrative starts with the White House suffering a "crash," which means that there has been some kind of security breach and no one is allowed in or out of the building. The "crash" in question is due to the disclosure that a staff member of the White House has the same name as a terrorist on a watch list. Coincidentally, the lock-down of the White House occurs when it is being visited by a group of students selected for a presidential classroom. From then on, the episode's plot follows two different scenarios: the dimly lit room where the suspicious Arab American staff member is interrogated by white men; and the brightly lit room where the racially plural group of students wait while different members of the presidential staff – including the fictional President and First Lady – drop in to discuss terrorism with them. Therefore, although a terrorist threat is performed in the episode, the representation of the terrorists' perspective is less than minimal, neither in the interrogation of the Arab staff member who turns out to be innocent, nor in the presidential classroom where invisible terrorists are discussed and debated yet not represented.

The first presidential staff member who talks to the children is the character of Josh Lyman, the White House Deputy Chief of Staff played by Bradley Whitford. It is Lyman who informs the students about the lock-down due to the "crash," and who first starts discussing terrorism with them. Their conversation opens with Lyman being asked by a student about the dangers of working at the White House:

> Student: What's the deal with everybody trying to kill you?
> Lyman: Well, it's not everybody, and they're trying to kill you too.
> Stud: But mostly you
> Lyman: No, both of us the same.

Lyman's message to the audience is clear: we are all in danger. The common American spectator had not to overactivate his/her imagination to recall this feeling as less than three weeks before this episode was aired, the 9/11 attacks had resulted in

more than two thousand civilian casualties. The general feeling of danger and tragedy was even greater those days, as weeks after the attacks, still the estimated death toll was over six thousand. The choice made by the episode's creator of making a presidential classroom be at the White House when it suffers a terrorist threat just increases this feeling of danger in the audience by suggesting that if the White House had been reached by a plane on 9/11, not only the president and his family but many more civilians including children would have lost their lives in the attack.

The conversation between Lyman and the students follows with Lyman remarking the power of the executive branch over its two partners:

> Josh: The executive branch is the most powerful of the three branches of the federal government.
> Student: Actually, Mr. Lyman, didn't the Framers make sure that the executive branch was the weakest of the branches?
> Lyman: Yes, I suppose, technically, constitutionally, the legislative branch is the most powerful, but we get a motorcade.

Then, Lyman tells the students an anecdote about how his mother insists on him to carry a box with personal objects at the trunk of his car just in case something happened to him due to his "heroic" job.

If the former part of Lyman's talk conveyed that not only the executive branch but all of us were in danger, this latter, on the contrary, remarks the importance of his job as a member of the executive branch. When he responds to the student on the "technically, constitutionally" supposed priority of the legislative branch over the other two, it does not but confirm the supremacy of the executive branch as being "in fact" the most powerful according to him. As it is followed by Lyman's sentimental anecdote implying the risks of working for the president, it is displayed the idea that we may all be in danger, but the executive branch is both powerful – the most – and brave. It is underlined that we can count on the executive branch as they risk their lives every day for us. Indeed, the section encourages us as audience to give our

support to this powerful branch "in charge" at critical moments such as the current one. Considering this TV broadcast of executive devotion, it is understandable that on October 2001 President Bush reached the highest rate of public support ever achieved by a President of the United States, 90%, according to the official CBS News/New York Times polls (Frankovic, 2009).

After Lyman recalls his personal "courageous" story, the presidential class approaches the question of who the terrorists are. By making the students talk, the series intends to emulate the conversations than were taking place in the streets of America the days and weeks after 9/11. However, in the series, there is the figure of Lyman who guides the students' opinion towards the desired conclusion. Indeed, it is the audience's opinion the one which is guided through this TV performing circus.

> Student: So why is everybody trying to kill us?
> Student: It's not everybody.
> Student: It seems like everybody.
> Student: It's just the Arabs.
> Student: Saying "the Arabs" is too general.
> Student: It's Islamics.
> Lyman: It's not Arabs. It's not Islamics. Answer the following question:
> Islamic Extremist is to Islamic as blank is to Christianity.
> Student: Stud: Christian fundamentalist?
> Lyman: No.
> Student: Jehovah Witnesses?
> Lyman: No. Guys, the Christian right may not be your cup of tea but they're not blowing stuff up.
> The answer is KKK. It's the Klan gone medieval and global.
> It could have less to do with Islamic man and women of faith whom there are millions. Muslims defend the country in the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, National Guard, Police and Fire Department.

In this part of the conversation, Lyman's intention is to reduce that "everybody" in the "why is everybody trying to kill us" initial question to "Islamic Extremists." However, in his way for it, Lyman compares radical Christians to radical Muslims in the benefit of the former by remarking the "natural" inclination of the latter towards violence. Indeed, Lyman also compares Islamic Extremists with the

KKK in the benefit of the KKK, as Islamic Extremists are even more "medieval," meaning not yet enlightened by "reason," and more globally dangerous. Finally, Lyman's conclusion concerning how millions of Muslims defend the country in the Army, Navy… just reinforces the dichotomical distinction between "evil" Muslims, worst than radical Christians and the KKK, and "good" Muslims, the patriotic ones who would die defending the nation. This either-or strategy implies that a Muslim living in the United States "must" be patriotic and exercise patent patriotism in order not to be included in the ranks of the enemy. Therefore, in his supposed prevention of all Arabs and Muslim to be considered terrorists, Lyman does indeed demonize Islamic terrorists and indoctrinate American Arabs and Muslims on the ways for not being pointed as responsible for terrorism: either die for Allah or be patriotic and die for the United States, you choose. Lyman's defence is wrong from the beginning as it starts from the erroneous question. "Why everybody is trying to kill us?" is just a rephrase of the notorious "Why do they hate us?" discourse which *a priori* establishes the biased categories of "They who hate" and "Us who are innocent" as unquestionable premises.

The performative exploration on the part of the students guided by Lyman on the issue of who the terrorists are is followed by "supposed" attempts to find reasons for that "attributed" hatred on the terrorists' part:

> Lyman: So, let's ask the question again.
> Student: Why are Islamic Extremists trying to kill us?
> Lyman: A reasonable question if ever I heard one. Why are we targets of war?
> Student: Because we're Americans.
> Lyman: That's it?
> Student: It's our freedom.
> Lyman: No other reasons?
> Student: Freedom and democracy.
> Lyman: I'll tell you. Right or wrong and I think they're wrong, it's probably a good idea to acknowledge they do have specific complaints. I hear them everyday. The people we support. Troops in Saudi Arabia,

> sanctions against Iraq, support for Egypt. It's not that they dislike Irving Berlin.

Then, Donna Moss, the Senior Assistant to Josh Lyman, who is played by Janel Moloney, enters into the conversation:

> Moss: Yes it is.
> Lyman: No, it's not.
> Moss: I don't know about Irving Berlin, but your ridiculous search for rational reasons why somebody stamps on a bomb is ridiculous.
> Lyman: She does have a point, albeit college-girlish.
> Moss: Watch as he puts me down and makes my point at the exact same time.
> Lyman: What is Islamic extremism? It's strict adherence to a particular interpretation of seventh century Islamic Law as practiced by the prophet Mohammed. And when I say strict adherence I'm not kidding around. Men are forced to pray, grow beards a certain length. Among my favorites is there's only one acceptable cheer at a soccer match: Allah akbar. God is great. If you guys are getting creamed, then you're on your own. Things are a lot less comic for women who aren't allowed to attend school or have jobs. They're not allowed to be unaccompanied and often times get publicly stoned to death for crimes like not wearing a veil. I don't have to tell you they won't shout at a soccer match they're never gonna go to one.
> Student: So, what bothers them about us?
> Lyman: The variety of cheers alone coming from the cheap seats in Giant Stadium when they're playing the cowboy is enough for a jihad. To say nothing of street corners lined church to synagogue next to mosque. Newspapers that can print anything they want. And women who can do anything they want including taking a rocket ship to outer space, vote and play soccer. This is a plural society. That means we accept more than one idea. It offends them. So yes, she does have a point, but it doesn't mean you should listen to her.

Many elements must be addressed here regarding this sequence because it contains established political and social discourses interconnected to one another and sometimes even abused like when the feminist discourse is employed to justify the incoming invasion of a country. The sequence opens with Lyman asserting the rationality of the question "Why are Islamic Extremists are trying to kill us?," therefore validating the discourse of "Why do they hate us?" Then, it is Lyman who includes the term "war" in his speech. By asking "Why are we the targets of war?" he is taking for granted that there is a war in which the United States is the target, the

innocent side. On the reasons mentioned for that alleged war against the United States, the students name three: the mere fact of being Americans, freedom and democracy. Lyman, then, mentions in passing that, although wrong, the terrorists have specific complaints like the United States support for Israel in its warfare against Palestine, the presence of troops in Saudi Arabia and sanctions imposed to Iraq. However, the significance of these referred reasons is played down in the series through different strategies. Firstly, Lyman says he hears these reasons "everyday," meaning that they are so much repeated that they are tiring and not worthy. Secondly, when his assistant Donna attempts to discredit him for trying to find rational reasons for acts of terror, she actually reinforces the validity of what Lyman exposes later on, his opinion in the guise of the "real" reasons, and not those expressed by terrorist groups which Lyman is so tired of hearing.

According to Lyman, it is the strictness of Islamic Extremists what originates terrorism. Strictness in their adherence to a seventh century law – Islam as outdated – and strictness towards women. Then, a description of the unfair situation of women under these regimes is offered as if related to the 9/11 attacks against the United States, when it is rather some sort of moral justification, besides revenge, for the United States' attacks that soon were coming up. Indeed, on October 7, 2001, four days after this *The West Wing* episode was aired, the United States declared war on Afghanistan by launching the Operation Enduring Freedom, which started with a severe air bombing of the Afghan cities of Kabul, Jalalabad and Kandahar. As it occurred with the Gulf War in the nineties, and even before with the Vietnam War in the sixties and seventies, the War in Afghanistan was broadcast by the American media. However, the government of the United States had learned from Vietnam the importance of the support of the media at gaining a war. Indeed, the public opposition

the United States Government suffered at the Vietnam War both abroad and at home was partly and mostly due to the "realistic" way displayed by the American media when portraying examples of the "horrors" of the war in which the American superiority was made evident.

In the War in Afghanistan, as it also will occur in the Iraq War in 2003, the American war reporters were made accomplices to the United States military units, sharing meals, tents and above all, time together. Meanwhile at home, the Bush Administration and the US media focused on overspreading the need to rescue Afghan women and children from oppression as a means to justify at home the war abroad. Feminist discourses were abused and misused during this media campaign, as for example when on November 17, 2001, seven weeks after 9/11, Laura Bush became the first First Lady to deliver the president's Saturday morning radio address to the nation, and assured that "The brutal oppression of women is a central goal of the terrorists… Under the Taliban law, women face beatings for laughing. The Taliban threaten to pull out women's fingernails for wearing nail polish" (Laura Bush, 2001). In the sequence of *The West Wing* episode we are discussing, Lyman's remark on the possibility for women under the Taliban Law "to be stoned to death for crimes like not wearing a veil" seems to follow the same ideological manipulation. However, in a much more interesting – an honest – exercise of self-criticism, scholars like Rosenberg in "Rescuing Woman and Children" have addressed precisely how "the trope of saving women and children may be view as emerging from a social imaginary dominated by a masculinized national state that casts itself in a paternal role, saving those who are abused by rival men and nations" (Rosenberg, 2003, p. 83).

During the episode sequence in question, when the students ask once again "What bothers them about us?," it is the third and most obvious reformulation of the

"Why do they hate us?" discourse that is uttered in the same sequence and which seems to dominate it if not the entire episode. To answer it, Lyman displays what he considers the motivations for terrorism: US freedom of speech, of creed, and for women. Not only is Lyman's perspective substantially self-centred, as it focuses on the American ideal as primary cause for international terror, but it is also essentially utopian and "selective," as it does not take into account other "actual" freedom limitations like those imposed by US troops abroad.

The episode follows with Toby Ziegler, the fictional White House Communications Director played by Richard Schiff, dropping in and going on with the lecture on terrorism to the students and the audience. If the character of Lyman had abused feminist discourses to justify the incoming attack to Afghanistan, Ziegler's part on the indoctrination consists in abusing historical ones. Ziegler elaborates for the students an extended "historical" metaphor whose ground does not exactly match with the role of the United States in both compared situations:

> Ziegler: Taliban isn't the recognized government of Afghanistan. The Taliban took over the recognized government of Afghanistan.
> When you think of Afghanistan, think of Poland.
> When you think of the Taliban, think of the Nazis.
> When you think of the citizens of Afghanistan, think of Jews in concentration camps.

Such presentation of the events results indeed in equating the liberation by the United States of Nazi concentration camps in 1945 with the invasion of Afghanistan by the US in October 2001. As we referred before, the War in Afghanistan started on October 7, 2001, with the Operation Enduring Freedom, which began with an initial air campaign that almost immediately prompted international concerns over the number of Afghan civilians being killed. According to Herold,[31] between October 7,

[31] Marc Herold is a reputed expert on the War in Afghanistan and its death toll at both sides, including military or civilians.

2001, and January 1, 2002, at least 1,000-1,300 Afghan civilians were directly killed by US-led aerial bombing campaigns, and by mid-January 2002, at least 3,200 more Afghans had died of starvation, exposure, associated illnesses, or injury sustained while in flight from war zones, as a result of the US war and airstrikes (Herold, 2001). Even Afghan President Hamid Karzai had repeatedly to plead with the foreign military forces in his country to stop killing so many Afghan civilians in their operations, as when on December 29, 2009, NATO Forces killed all the schoolchildren who were attending a friend's birthday party (Coghlan, 2009).

The character of Ziegler concludes his intervention by tracing his "personal" history of terrorism:

> Student: What was the first act of terrorism?
> Ziegler: In the first century, secret followers of Al-Hasan Ibn-al-Sabbah who were taught to believe in nothing and dare all carried out very swift and treacherous murders of fellow Muslims and did it in a state of religious ecstasy. Young men between 12 and 20 were given hashish and smuggled into… a especially designed pleasure garden, complete with concubines. They were told this was paradise and the master's angels would carry them back if they carried out murders of the master's enemies.

Then, it is the figure of Sam Seaborn, Deputy Communications Director played by Rob Lowe, who enters into the conversation:

> Seaborn: Tempation. I have name thee and thy name is woman.
> Lyman: This is Sam Seaborn, Deputy Communications Director. Sam is the knowledgeable terrorism expert. The good news is that in this government we have extremely knowledgeable experts.

It is observable how Ziegler in his "finale" mixes terrorism with both drugs and the 72-virgins stereotype that Seaborn helps him to complete with his "women as temptation" argument. Muslims high on hashish and sexually obsessed with concubines inhabit the portrait that Ziegler makes of terrorists in his peculiar history of terrorism. We are lucky to count on such "extremely knowledgeable experts" in the ranks of the Government, according to the episode.

It is the character of Seaborn who underlines the failure of terrorism as methodolgy: “It’s a hundred percent failure rate… Not only do terrorists fail at what they’re after. They always strengthen what they’re against.” It is then a student who brings the history of the United States into the discussion by asking Seaborn about the origins of the nation:

> Student: Weren’t we terrorists at the Boston Tea Party?
> Seaborn: Nobody got hurt at the Boston Tea Party. Except some fancy boys who didn’t have anything to wash down their crumpets. We jumped out while the British came down the road in bright red jackets but never was a war been so courteously declared. It was on parchment with calligraphy…

Once again, the way in which historical events are presented in the episode leaves the United States with total impunity virtually denying any involvement throughout its history in illegal political violence. Is not in fact violent rebellion at the very core of American history? Not only concerning the referred Independence War, which although describes as “courteously” was a war after all. Even looking more backwards at the very origins of the country, it can be found violent massacres: from the foundational Roanoke colony disappeared in 1590 to the Pequot War of 1637, in which the Puritan setters exterminated the entire Pequot tribe – 700 individuals – in one single day at the attack known as Mystic massacre (Tindall, 1984, p. 183-96).

The special episode of *The West Wing* goes on with even more unfortunate “lecturers,” like the character of C.J. Cregg. The fictional White House Press Secretary interpreted by Allison Janney, a figure who is introduced by her colleagues as someone with “a bizarre affection for the CIA,” tells the students:

> We need spies, human spies. Wanna get jobs and serve your country? Study Arabic, Chinese and Farsi… We’re gonna to do stuff. We’re to tap some phones and we’re gonna partner with people who are the lesser evil. I’m sorry but terrorists don’t have armies and navies. They didn’t have capitals. Some of these guys we have to walk up to shoot them… It’s time to give the intelligence agencies the money and manpower they need.

After such eloquent defence of civil liberties, those that were so taken into account after the attacks regarding colored people, it is the character of the President of the United States played by Martin Sheen who makes his entrance in the indoctrinating process:

> Student: Sir, Do you consider yourself a man of principle?
> President: I try to be.
> Student: Don't you consider there's something noble about being a martyr?
> President: A martyr would rather suffer death at the hands of an oppressor than renounce his beliefs. Killing yourself and innocent people to make a point is sick, twisted, brutal, dumb-ass murder. We don't need martyrs right now. We need heroes.

With fictions like this episode on the small screen, it is understandable that the military recruiting in the United States hit the ceiling in the weeks after the September 11, 2001, attacks. Moreover, it is remarkable the distinction the fictional President makes between martyrs and heroes. According to the fictional President, the terrorists' acts are described as "sick, twisted, brutal and dumb-as murder," while from the heroes he requires – and attempts to recruit – it is expected to travel to another country and kill people – sometimes civilians – in the "supposed" defence of a country or ideal. Nevertheless, certain differences remain. As the American stand-up comedian Bill Maher remarked on September 17, 2001, as host of the program *Politically Incorrect*: "The 9/11 terrorists were nor cowards. We have been the cowards lobbing cruise missiles from 2,000 miles away. That's cowardly. Staying in the airplane when it hits the building, say what you want about it, it's not cowardly." As a result of this remark, ABC Network decided not to renew Maher's contract for his TV program in 2002 as some financial supporters including FedEx and Sears pulled their advertisements from the show (Mooney, 2002, p. 77). In plain view of this evident censorship, I wonder exactly what freedom of speech is that which the terrorists allegedly cannot stand.

Finally, it is the character of Lyman who talks again at the end providing a sort of closure to this "national lecture" in the guise of accidental conversation:

> Student: Do you favor death penalty?
> Lyman: No
> Stud: But you think we should kill these people?
> Lyman: You don't have the choices in a war that you do in a jury room. But I wish we didn't have to. I think death is too simple… I'd put them in a small cell… for the rest of their lives. And they'd get punched in the mouth every night at bedtime by a different person every night. There'd be a long list of volunteers. But that's all right. We'll wait… Go to the movies, go to a party, read a book... In the meantime, remember pluralism.

The convenient reference again to "war" indeed touches a key point in the way the term "international terrorism" was substituted by that of "war," all in order to exercise harder measures against those who practice that form of political violence, as the character of Lyman very consciously remarks with his "You don't have the choices in a war that you do in a jury room." Lyman makes also a brief defense of some kind of torture on prisoners and concludes recommending the students to go to the movies *a la* President Bush when in the wake of 9/11 notoriously asked Americans to "go shopping".

Considering now the other plot of the episode, it takes place in a dark interrogation room in the White House where one alleged terrorist is questioned by the character of Leo McGarry, fictional Chief of Staff played by John Spencer. One of the aspects that were more criticized of the episode is the radical difference of lighting and created atmospheres when the episode goes from the bright presidential class to the dark interrogation room. For example, scholars such as Puar and Rai in their article "Monster, Terrorist, Fag: The War on Terrorism and the Production of Docile Patriots" assured regarding this 9/11 special episode of *The West Wing*:

> We see a double-framed reality. On the one side, brightly lit and close to the hearth (invoking the home and the family), is the classroom, a racially and gender-plural space. A space where normal, docile but heterogeneous psyches

> are produced, in opposition to the terrorist-monster-fag. A space where the president as Father enters and says that what we need right now are heroes… where male experts regale them with fantastic facts concerning the first acts of terrorism committed back in the tenth century by drug frenzied Muslims… On the other side of the frame, a dimly lit room, an enclosed, monitored space, managed entirely by white men, at the center of which is a racially and sexually ambiguous figure, a subject who at one and the same time is a possible monster and a person to be corrected. A tiny, darkened stage where the ritual of examination, of the interrogation, is enacted on and through a subject who must perform both his racial and cultural difference and his normality. A subject quarantined, and so secluded, but whose testimony becomes spectacle through which power will work. A subject whose greatest moment, it seems, comes when, after being terrorized at gunpoint, racially profiled, and insulted, he goes back to work. (Puar and Rai, 2002, p. 134)

Foucault's concept of monstrosity as a fundamental piece of the Western created picture of those considered "abnormals" as discussed in *Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* (1961), as well as Bentham's "Panopticon" design for prisons, analyzed by Foucault in *Surveiller et punir* (1975), prove to be very useful when approaching both the interrogation sequence of this episode of The West Wing and more broadly the return of the figure of the monster in most post-9/11 discourses. Many 9/11 fictional pieces that were focused on the victims' stories also included very briefly this discourse of monstrosity in their minimal allusions to the perpetrators of the 9/11 attacks. One example of this tendency can be found in Mike Binder's film *Reign Over Me* (2007), in which the mother-in-law of the protagonist Charlie Fineman played by Adam Sandler names the 9/11 terrorists by the term "monsters" in various occasions.

In *The West Wing* episode, although the interrogation sequence referred takes place in an elegant yet dark office and the alleged prisoner is never handcuffed nor physically assaulted, the interrogator does not hold back when expressing his racial prejudices against the detainee:

> Rakim: It's not uncommon for Arab-Americans to be the first suspected when that sort of thing happens.
> McGarry: I can't imagine why.

Rakim: Look...
McGarry: No, I'm trying to figure out why anytime there's terrorist activity people always assume it's Arabs. I'm racking my brain.
Rakim: I don't know the answer Mr. McGarry, but I can tell you that it's horrible.
McGarry: Well, that's the price you pay.
Rakim: Excuse me? The price I pay for what?
McGarry: Let's go on with the questions. Where were you…

A more than probable answer for both McGarry and Rakim's question of "why anytime there's terrorist activity people assume it's Arabs" is the persistent and prolonged vilification of Arab people in mainstream Western movies throughout the last decades. This issue has been excellently reported by Shaheen in *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People* (2001), a research for which Shaheen surveyed more than 900 film appearances of Arab characters in mainstream movies including hits like *Aladdin* or *Back to the Future*, to confirm that out of those 900, only 12 were positive and 50 were balanced. Shaheen documents a century of offensive stereotypes and shows how the image of the "dirty Arab" has reemerged with force over the last 30 years. Shaheen's outstanding work even includes an appendix containing a list of epithets thrown at Arabs in commercial movies (Shaheen, 2001). Indeed, these insults are in keeping with the opinion expressed in the episode regarding the price Arabs "have to pay" according to the racial profiling that McGarry exercises on the "alleged" terrorist.

The interrogation sequence concludes when news about Rakim's innocence come to the office. McGarry offers some "sort of" apologize arguing that "We're under a greater than usual amount of… you know…," sentence that could perfectly have been completed by "…amount of racial profiling." McGarry leaves the office urging sympathetically the detainee to come back to work: "Hey kid, way to be at your desk." As Puar and Rai underline regarding this sequence, this is the prisoner's "greatest moment," when after being wrongly accused and insulted, he is ordered to

"come back to work" (Puar and Rai, 2002, p. 134). Indeed, if the conclusion reached at the presidential class was "go to the movies", here, in the other framed reality, the final message to the Arab suspect is not other but "Now that is proved that you, Arab, are not a terrorist, keep showing that you are a good patriot and go back to work for the Government that has just insulted you."

I have left for the end of this chapter the analysis of the speech made by the fictional First Lady to the students that gives name to the episode. She, again accidentally, drops in as another invited guest, and addresses another patriotic monologue to the class and the national audience. When the character of the First Lady Abbey Bartlet, played by Stockard Channing, is asked by the students about how "terrorism" started, her answer refers to the Bible no less:

> Student: How did all this started?
> First Lady: How did what started?
> Student: Well, this.
> First Lady: Sarah. God said to Abraham: "Look toward the Heaven and number the stars and so shall your descendents be." She sent Abraham to the bed of her maid, Hagar, and Sarah said to Abraham: "Cast out this slave woman with her son. For the son of this slave woman will not be here with my son Isaac." And so it began. The Jews, the sons of Isaac. The Arabs, the sons of Ishmael. In the end, the two sons cope together to bury their father.

Reducing the 9/11 terrorist attack to an anti-feminist question is as unacceptable as to eradicate its political and economic components by referring to an Old Testament dispute as its original religious basis. The choice of "Isaac and Ishmael" as title of this 9/11 special episode corroborates this effort on the part of its creators to displace the attacks from the political violence domain and ascribe them to feminist, religious and alleged human rights issues as a means to sell them better to a misinformed audience. The entire episode does not but provide pedagogies of patriotism and masculinity at both frames where the plot occurs: in the presidential class, where the plural and national family space finds its essence by being indoctrinated by mostly paternal

figures at the home of the nation; and in the interrogation room, where the color man is quarantined and insulted for its “alleged” monstrosity until his evidenced innocence is indefinitely redeemed by his patriotic back to work without further complaints.

PART III

TERRORISTS IN AMERICA

We are not hated because we practice democracy, value freedom, or uphold human rights. We are hated because our government denies these things to people in Third World countries whose resources are coveted by our multinational corporations. That hatred we have sown has come back to haunt us in the form of terrorism…. Instead of sending our sons and daughters around the word to kill Arabs so we can have the oil under their sand, we should send them to rebuild their infrastructures, supply clean water, and feed starving children. In short, we should do good instead of evil. Who would try to stop us? Who would hate us? Who would want to bomb us? That is the truth the American people need to hear.

– Robert M. Bowman, former lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Air Force, *What Can We Do About Terrorism?* (2001)

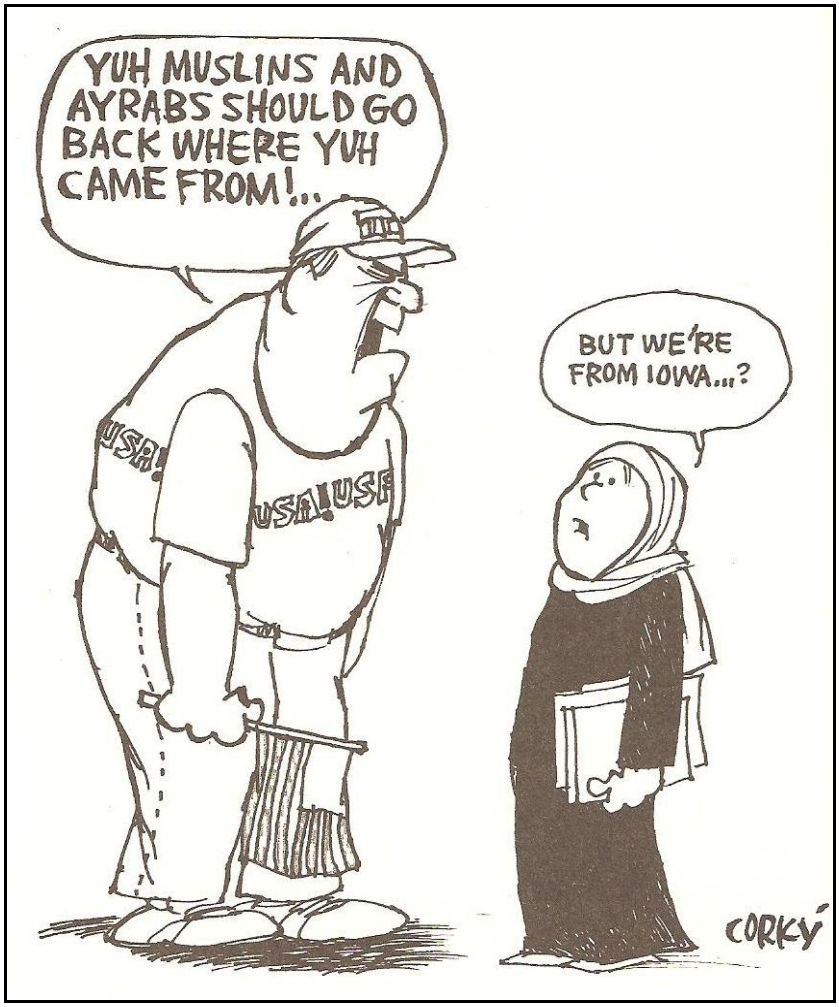


Figure iv. Corky Trinidad, *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 2002.

Part III

Terrorists in America

This third section is focused on how the 9/11 terrorists interacted with the American scenario, or rather, on how the interaction between the terrorists and the American people has been imagined by Western authors. The artistic works that configure this Part Three offer detailed portraits of the terrorists, not like those minimal and shadowy sketches that were depicted in the 9/11 works approached in the former Part Two. Now, on the contrary, the 9/11 hijackers are "allegedly" allowed to speak by themselves while they are also perceived and described by other co-protagonist characters, mostly Americans. Moreover, the narrative strategies adopted by the authors of the 9/11 works approached in this Part Three are also different from those already seen before. If the principal mechanism was initially the "unrepresentation" of the 9/11 terrorists through those minimal portraits already approached, we find now rather "misrepresentations" of them: very well crafted pictures of the terrorists are now elaborated yet attending to the biased interests of each author. Indeed, we will observe how most of the 9/11 works that make the reader/spectator have access to the terrorists' fictional minds do it as an excuse to promote the westernist visions and political agendas that each author advocates for within their non-fictional writing.

The first work that will be addressed in this section is the novel *Terrorist* (2006), by John Updike. Extraordinarily well received by the public and horribly by the critics, this novel portrays how a fictional Muslim teenager from New Jersey gets involved into a terrorist plot in the midst of a conflicting multicultural America. The equations established by Updike in his novel linking Islam with an alleged "passion for death," and on the other side, the United States with the very concept of "life,"

make of this racially prejudiced novel a dangerous ideological artefact that is inspected in Chapter Seven.

In the same line of Updike's Islamic demonization, Martin Amis's short story "The Last Days of Muhammad Atta" (2006) "fictionally" introduces us into one of the actual hijackers' mind. The scatological portrait carried out by Amis of a terribly hating individual whose disgust and anger are inevitably reflected in his face, leaves the reader with the impression that the measure to be adopted for combating terrorism is not only "racial" but "facial" profiling. Amis's non-fictional recommendation for racially-based strip searching techniques, as well as his controversy with the literary critic Terry Eagleton will also be addressed in-depth in Chapter Eight in relation to Amis's fictional 9/11 short story.

Chapter Nine focuses on Andre Dubus III's *The Garden of Last Days* (2008), a novel that attempts to reflect the bits of American night life that some 9/11 terrorists enjoyed days before the attacks. Surrounded by strippers and thugs, the snapshots that Dubus provides of the terrorists fall into the most recurrent stereotype of presenting them as sexual maniacs who perpetrate the attacks just for the reward of the seventy-two virgins that are waiting for them in paradise.

Finally, Chapter Ten explores the animalistic world created by Stan Lee in his comic "The Sleeping Giant" (2002), which depicts a multicultural America inhabited by a variety of animals governed by a wise elephant who gets enraged when his golden palace is destroyed by the terrorist "rats." The distinction between the "evil" rats who live "outside" the kingdom, and the patriot rats who play baseball, have farms, and repair other animals' shoes does not but instruct Arab Americans regarding which roles are expected from them as colored immigrants in a "plural" society.

Chapter 7

John Updike's *Terrorist*:

Labeling Islam as Death and the West as Life

In *On Suicide Bombing* (2007), Asad denounced how "for many non-Muslims in the United States, Western Europe, and Israel, the suicide bomber quickly became the icon of an Islamic 'culture of death'" (Asad, 2007, p. 1). Asad concretely accused the Western media of contributing in the overspread of such identification of Islam with a culture intrinsically linked to the idea of death. Asad provided various examples, among them, when the journalist and professor of Law at Harvard University Alan Dershowitz put the prosecution's case against Muslim suicide bombers in the *Guardian* in an article called "In Love with Death" in the following terms:

> Why do these overprivileged young people support this *culture of death*…? The answer was obviously religion – a certain kind of religion: The time has come to address the real root cause of suicide bombing: incitement by certain religious and political leaders who are creating a *culture of death* and exploiting the ambiguous teachings of an important religion. (Dershowitz, 2004) [emphasis added]

The parallel equation also became very popular in the mainstream media in the wake of September 11, 2001, and it consisted in identifying the West with the idea of "life." As Hauerwas denounced in the special edition of the *South Atlantic Quarterly* dedicated to the analysis of 9/11, another sign of this post-9/11 media campaign pro-West and against Islam appeared in the *New York Review of Books* on January 17, 2002, inside Ian Buruma and Vishai Margalit's polemic article "Occidentalism" – some years later this article turned into the book *Occidentalism: The West in the Eyes of its Enemies* (2004) –. In their article, Buruma and Margalit argued that in the non-Western world there is tendency to loath and dehumanize everything associated with

the West, and observed that "when contempt for bourgeois creature's comforts becomes contempt for life itself you know the West is under attack" (Buruma and Margalit, 2002; Hauerwas, 2003). Once again, we can observe how this kind of fatalistic rhetoric does not but reinforce the "convenient" westernist identification of the West with "life itself," generalizing a disdain on the part of non-westerners for certain western values and turning it into an absolute culture of death which rejects any possible form of life.

John Updike's novel *Terrorist* (2006) is a good example of how both equations we have just mentioned and which link Islam with death and the West with life can be perpetuated through a fictional artifact. The novel tells the story of eighteen-year-old Ahmad, a New Jersey Muslim boy in constant struggling between his strictly followed faith and his sexual desire for his African-American classmate Joryleen Grant. Ahmad, the son of an Irish-American mother and an absent Egyptian father, gets recruited by an imam into a plot to bomb Lincoln Tunnel. The narrative switches from Ahmad's perspective to other characters' points of view: Jack Levy, his Jewish guidance counselor at High School, who has an affair with Ahmad's mother; Levy's wife, Beth, an overweighed German-American addicted to TV; and the Director of the US Department of Homeland Security, whose assistant, Hermione, turns to be Beth's sister.

The novel's first lines directly introduce the reader into Ahmad's harsh thoughts towards all those who surround him:

> *Devils,* Ahmad thinks. *These devils seek to take away my God.* All day long, at Central High School, girls sway and sneer and expose their soft bodies and alluring hair... The teachers, weak Christians and nonobservant Jews…They lack true faith; they are not on the Straight Path; they are unclean... full of lust and fear and infatuation with things that can be bought. Infidels… who habitually drink too much. Some get divorces; some live with others unmarried... They are paid to instill virtue and democratic values by the state government down in Trenton, and that Satanic government farther down, in

> Washington, but the values they believe in are Godless: biology and chemistry and physics. (Updike, 2006, p. 3-4) [emphasis added by the author]

Through Ahmad's words and descriptions of his environment, what is really portrayed from the first pages is his own intolerance and his radical and rigorous version of Islamic practice. However, Updike also shows at the novel's opening a – to some extent – reasonable protagonist who is able to question some of his assumed dogmas: "In the year past he has grown three inches... He will not grow any taller, he thinks, in this life or the next. *If there is a next,* an inner devil murmurs. What evidence beyond the Prophet's blazing and divinely inspired words proves that there is a next?" (p. 5) [emphasis added by the author].

The structure of the novel is quite simple: starting with Ahmad's initial hard remarks, Updike makes the reader sympathize with him little by little by showing his struggle between his faith on one side and the rest of his "life" on the other: his love for Joryleen, his studies, his job as a truck driver, etc… Although he is finally the key element of the plot that will attempt to bomb Lincoln Tunnel with thousands of people inside, Ahmad is shown literally unable to harm a beetle:

> Saturday morning, before the store has opened, he sits on a step of the loading platform, observing a black beetle struggling on his back on the concrete of the parking lot. The day is September eleventh, still summer… Ahmad rises from his seat on the coarse plank step and stands over the insect in lordly fashion, feeling huge. Yet he shies from touching this mysterious fallen bit of life. Perhaps it has a poisonous bite, or, like some miniature emissary from Hell, it will fasten onto his finger and never let go. Many a boy – Tylenol, for one [Joryleen's African American boyfriend and, at the end of the novel, her pimp] – would simply crush this irritating presence with his foot, but for Ahmad the option does not exist: it would produce a broadened corpse, a squashed tangle of tiny parts and spilled vital fluid, and he does not wish to contemplate any such organic horror. He looks around him briefly for a tool, for something stiff with which to flip the insect over... he manages, after a few tentative, squeamish attempts, to flip the tiny creature at his mercy over onto its legs... But the bug... merely creeps a fraction of its length and then remains still... An airplane gaining altitude out of Newark rattles in the hardening sky. The beetle, paired with its microscopically shrinking shadow, remains still. It had been on its back in its death throes and now is dead, leaving behind a largeness

> that belongs not to this world. The experience, so strangely magnified, has been, Ahmad feels certain, supernatural. (p. 252-54)

This epiphanic passage of the beetle contains the most obvious yet cryptic reference to and description of the September 11, 2001, attacks inside the novel. Ahmad's attempt to save the beetle occurs in the very 9/11 anniversary, and it also includes rattling airplanes departing from Newark. The magnified death of the beetle which leaves behind "a largeness that belongs not to this world" echoes and pays tribute to the 9/11 victims, whose "squashed tangle of tiny parts and spilled vital fluid," whose "organic horror," Ahmad "does not wish to contemplate." This passage, in which the would-be terrorist is portrayed attempting to save that "bit of life," foreshadows Ahmad's last minute rejection to perpetrate the massacre at Lincoln Tunnel at the end of the novel. Yet, if the figure of Ahmad develops in such a way, that is, from those "hating" remarks at the beginning to this symbolic rescuing attempt towards the end, it does not occur the same with his – the only – portrait of Islam conveyed in the novel, which remains monolithic and in opposition to whatever is associated to the idea of life.

At the end of the novel, when Ahmad is in his truck and he is about to explode the bomb in Lincoln Tunnel, he watches how:

> Two children in the vehicle ahead, lovingly dressed and groomed by their parents, bathed and soothed every night, gaze toward him solemnly, having sensed the something erratic in his focus, the something unnatural in the expression of his face, mixed with the glaze of his windshield. Reassuringly, he lifts the fingers of his right hand from the steering wheel and waves them, like the legs of a beetle on its back. Recognized at last, the children smile, and Ahmad cannot but smile back. (p. 307)

The "beetle" foreshadowing gets confirmed and Ahmad does not finally explode the bomb. His "erratic" and "unnatural" focus is corrected by the contemplation of another "bit of life," this time two innocent children. Ahmad's Jewish tutor's convincing words in the last minute aboard the truck also contribute to Ahmad's

rejection of the attack. The character of Jack Levy develops then from a bitter and antiheroic teacher at the beginning of the novel to a savior of thousands at the end. "You're a victim, Ahmad – a fall guy," Levy reminds Ahmad. If tutor Levy is finally turned into a hero, and terrorist-to-be Ahmad into a victim of his circumstances, the novel puts the blame on the figure of Ahmad's imam, Shaikh Rashid, who is demonized for being responsible for brainwashing young students with his Koranic recitations and introducing them into organized terrorist cells.

The novel closes with Ahmad resolving his inner struggles by literally exchanging Islam for the beauty of life in the United States:

> All around them [Ahmad and Levy], up Eight Avenue to Broadway, the great city crawls with people, some smartly dressed, many of them shabby, a few beautiful but most not, all reduced by the towering structures around them to the size of insects, but scuttling, hurrying, intent in the milky morning sun upon some plan or scheme or hope they are hugging to themselves, their reason for living another day, each one of them impaled live upon the pin of consciousness, fixed upon self-advancement and self-preservation. That, and only that. *These devils*, Ahmad thinks, *have taken away my God.* (p. 310) [emphasis added by the author]

This happy ending in which the protagonist exchanges his God and his faith for acquiring certain sense of "self-advancement and self-preservation" completes the equation that the whole novel suggests: that Islam is a "culture of death" which opposes in every aspect to the idea of "life," which gets represented by the myriad of cultures which coexist in the United States. In the process of making the terrorist protagonist more likable to the readers, his figure is victimized in the novel by making his actions the result of unfortunate decisions made up by a problematic teenager. Ahmad's final rejection of his "God" and his redemption by the world's beauty of life manifest the fake attempt that the novel performs in order to understand both the terrorist's mind and Islam, a creed which gets finally discarded as an intolerant religion unable to exist side-by-side with any possible way of living.

We already saw some examples of how this Updike's perpetuation of anti-Islamic and pro-Western rhetoric was also disseminated by the post-9/11 mainstream media. However, this process of linking Islam with "death" and the West with "life" also took place in the academic sphere through theoretical works of some reputed intellectuals who addressed the attacks of September 11, 2001, as their object of analysis. This is the case of Baudrillard's *The Spirit of Terrorism* (2002), in which, although Islam is not made directly responsible for the 9/11 attacks – globalization is, according to Baudrillard –, anti-Islamic rhetoric is displayed in his work by repetitively linking the Muslim creed to a lethal virus, to terrorism and to evil itself. As *The Spirit of Terrorism* is one of the most important and controversial theoretical approaches to the 9/11 attacks, let us focus on it for a moment to evidence how Baudrillard carries out his anti-Islamic discourse.

The principal thesis in *The Spirit of Terrorism* is not about Islam but about globalization. Baudrillard assures that 9/11 is without any doubt the result of "triumphant globalization battling against itself" (Baudrillard, 2002, p. 11). Regarding Islam, Baudrillard claims that "Islam is only the front" of the conflict (p. 15). It even seems that Baudrillard exonerates Islam when he declares that "if Islam dominated the world, terrorism would rise against Islam" (p. 12); or when he states that "No ideology, no cause – not even the Islamic cause – can account for the energy that fuels terror" (p. 9-10).

However, it is when Baudrillard explains how western philosophy has misunderstood the relationship between good and evil when his discourse becomes unequivocally anti-Islamic. Baudrillard starts his argumentation assuring that "No one seems to have understood that Good and Evil advance together, as part of the same movement" as "Good does not conquer Evil, nor indeed does the reverse happen" (p.

13), on which I totally agree. Yet, later on, Baudrillard underlines how naïf are Westerners in their belief that "the progress of Good, its advance in all fields (the sciences, technology, democracy, human rights), corresponds to a defeat of Evil" (p. 13). Here, it is Baudrillard himself and not "the naïf Westerners" who identifies "the advance of Good in all fields" with a list of Western values: "sciences, technology, democracy and human rights." Later, Baudrillard compares the balance between good and evil in the traditional universe with the geopolitical situation in the Cold War, assuring that, although the Cold War was a "balance of terror, there was, then, no supremacy of one over the other" until "the eclipse of Communism" and "the triumph of the values of Good." As "Evil regained an invisible autonomy", Baudrillard assures, it henceforward "developed exponentially" and a "*ghostly* enemy emerged, infiltrating itself throughout the whole planet, slipping in everywhere *like a virus*, welling up from all the interstices of power: Islam" (p. 15) [emphasis added]. Therefore, in his process of denouncing how the West has misunderstood the dependent and not mutually defeating relationship between good and evil, Baudrillard shows no shadow of reticence in deliberately assigning "the values of the good" to the West before and after the Cold War, and respectively, evil, first to communism, and finally and in an exponential form to "viral" Islam. When later on Baudrillard remarks how "Terrorism, like viruses, is everywhere" (p. 10), and when he describes the 9/11 events as "the spectacle of Evil" (p. 20), the terms "Islam", "virus", "terrorism" and "Evil" get deliberately interrelated, and their "attributed" ties reinforced into the same semantic field of 9/11. It is this same rhetoric which appears in Updike's final portrait of Ahmad's rejection of Islam as if Islamic religious itself were a disease from which the protagonist has finally recovered, thanks to the effects of contemplating several "bits" of American life.

One last remark by Baudrillard in *The Spirit of Terrorism* which deserves our attention is when he describes the West as a "zero death" system which can do nothing "against an enemy who has already turned his death into a counterstrike weapon. 'What does the American bombing matter? Our men are as eager to die as Americans are to live!' Hence the non-equivalent of the four thousand deaths inflicted at a stroke on a zero-death system" (p. 16). Through this remark, by pretending an invented non-Westerner voice and perspective, Baudrillard is directly implying that all civilians killed by American bombings wished to die. Presenting the West as a zero-death system and impersonating non-Westerners as "eager to die," Baudrillard completes his "West is life" and "Islam is death" picture paralleling the demonizing and generalizing strategies used by most fictional 9/11 works that we are scrutinizing in this research.

Baudrillard's bigoted words did not pass uncontested by other academics like Slavoj Žižec, who in his own 9/11 theoretical work, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real* (2002), directly attacked Baudrillard when commenting that "when terrorists are more and more described in the terms of a viral infection, as an attack of invisible bacteria, one should recall that the comparison of Jews to 'bacteria' attacking the sane social body is one of the classic topoi of anti-Semitism" (Žižec, 2002, p. 151).

Ahmad's Islam is not the only monotheist religion portrayed in Updike's *Terrorist*. Ahmad attends to a Christian ceremony just to listen his secretly beloved Joryleen singing in a Gospel chorus. The service is presented to the reader as it is perceived by Ahmad through free indirect style, so it can be read how "all seem to Ahmad more like a movie theater" (Updike, 2006, p. 49) and how to him "the Christian attitude" suggested that "God is an entertainer who, when He ceases to entertain, can be removed from the stage" (p. 50). The words of the priest are

portrayed instead in direct style when he recounts and interprets the biblical passage of the Flight from Egypt by Moses, Aaron, and the "chosen" people in search of the Promise Land. On the lines where these chosen people start to adore the golden calf, the "Christian *minbar*," as Ahmad calls him, the priest remarks:

> "The good Lord said, 'I can't *stand* these people.'… And he asked Moses and Aaron, as if just for the information, 'How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmur against me?' He doesn't wait for the answer; he answers Himself. The Lord, He slays *all* the scouts except for Caleb and Joshua. He tells *all* the others, that evil congregation, 'Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness.' He sentences the others… to forty years in this wilderness – 'and your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years… because you have been an *evil* congregation."… "No time off, be*cause*," continued the Christian imam, "you lacked *faith*…That was your iniquity… visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation… Moses tries to soften Him up… 'Pardon, I beseech thee,'… 'No way,' the Lord says back. 'I'm tired of all this forgiving I'm supposed to do… I want your carcasses.'"… "*Faith*," the preacher is proclaiming… "They didn't have faith. That is way they were an evil congregation. That is way the Israelites were visited by pestilence and shame and defeat in battle… Don't be like them, brothers and sisters. Tell me what you need."
> "*Faith*," a few voices weakly offer, uncertain.
> "Let me hear it again, louder. What do we all need?"
> "Faith," comes the more unified reply…
> "Faith in what? Let me hear it so those Canaanites quake in their big goatskin boots!"
> "Faith in the Lord!"
> "Yes, oh yes… Amen…"
> A small robed man who has made up for his shortness by growing his kinky hair into a tall puff lifts his arms in readiness as the grave men in pastel polyester suits take the plates the preacher has handed them and fan out, two down the center aisle and two on the sides. They expect money to be placed in the plates. (p. 56-61) [emphasis added by the author]

If the portrait that the novel does of Islam, as we already saw, is that of a hating and extremely intolerant religion, here it can be observed how the Christian faith does not result very benefited either. A God that punishes and an exultant priest who convinces his crew through instilling on them fear of God's rage are the most prominent features attached to the represented Christian rite, not to mention the collect scene of the money expected "to be placed in the plates" which echoes the medieval tithe. Not only Islam and Christianity but Judaism is also questioned by the

novel in a less direct way: by making Jack Levy's, the Jewish advisor's unobservancy something rational, for example, when he explains how he argued against his son's circumcision for "purely hygienic" reasons, claiming that "studies showed it would lower the risk of venereal disease" (p. 24).

As it was already mentioned before in this project while analyzing the omnipresence of religion in Paul Greengrass's film *United 93*, after 9/11, together with a resurgence of American patriotism and nationalism, it also seemed to emerge a renovated invigoration of religious faith on the part of the American people. In response to some journals, like *First Things*, which foreshadowed – and encouraged – the start of a religious awakening by declaring that "God and country are back," some critical voices of American secular intellectuals emerged denouncing how the Bush Administration "wanted it both ways. They want America to be "religious" (Hauerwas and Lentricchia, 2003, p. 249). Then, a series of inspiring, anticlerical academic works began to populate the libraries. Among them, one of the best representatives was Christopher Hitchens's excellent analysis "God is not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything" (2007), which traced back the damage caused by mainstream religions throughout history, reaching within three weeks of its publication date the top on the *New York Times* bestseller list.

It could seem at first sight that Updike's critical portrait in his novel of the three more popular monotheist religions is carried out in the same anticlerical line than these referred post-9/11 atheist approaches which emerged in response to certain (encouraged?) religious backlash. However, Hitchens himself wrote in the *Atlantic Monthly* "No Way," a very unfavorable review of Updike's novel. Hitchens assured that Updike's characters in *Terrorist* are mere "stereotypes" and that the novel does

not really offer any insight on the motivations behind a terrorist attack. Hitchens mocks Updike's investigation on this matter remarking how

> Young Ahmad, who has an absent Muslim father and a ditsy and whorish Irish mother (who probably has red hair and freckles and green eyes; I hon-estly couldn't be bother to go back and double-check *that*), is quite a study. With such a start in life, who wouldn't start hanging around the mosque and dreaming of a high-octane ticket to Paradise? (Hitchens, 2006) [emphasis added by the author]

Actually, the vast majority of press reviews about Updike's novel were rather negative, and not for nothing. In the *New York Times*, Michiko Kakutani affirmed that "Ahmad talks not like a teenager who was born and grew up in New Jersey but like an Islamic terrorist in a bad action-adventure movie, or someone who has been brainwashed and programmed to spout jihadist clichés" (Kakutani, 2006). In the *New York Review of Books*, Jonathan Raban dismissed Ahmad's conversion to terrorism as "implausible" (Raban, 2006), and in the *New York Magazine* John Leonard condemned that "the characters in Terrorist may be sketchy, the action perfunctory, and the stereotyping wearisome" (Leonard, 2006). In the *Washington Post*, Amitav Ghosh even suggested that the novel's stereotyping could be racially biased: "There is nothing plausible about the characters of this book: Only two of them are half-way believable, and they are Jack Levy and Ahmad's Irish-American mother. It is no accident, perhaps, that neither of them is brown" (Ghosh, 2006).

The few academic works dedicated to the specific analysis of 9/11 fictions are even harder in their condemnation of Updike's novel. If Hitchens titled his review on *Terrorist* "No Way," in reference to how the 9/11 attacks shall not be approached in fiction in the way Updike does, Simpson does not contain himself when titling his essay about Updike's *Terrorist* and Messud's *The Emperor's Children* "Telling It Like It Isn't" (2008). Simpson starts arguing that both 9/11 novels share a common "nothing has changed" and "life goes on" rhetoric which is portrayed through "the

lives of these fictional Americans" who are not transformed at all "by the tragedy or even the spectacle." According to Simpson, the question that both novels raise is

> whether this response (or lack of it) is a tribute to the resilience of ordinary life or a more damning indictment of the sheer indifference and self-centredness of the homeland mainstream… The ethos of both books is – despite their relation to a world-historical "tragedy" – closer to the comedic, where mishap and mayhem are risked but finally (mostly) avoided and the really bad things happen offstage and to others. (Simpson, 2008, p. 216)

Regarding Updike's *Terrorist*, Simpson adds that "the freedoms of indirect free style" are abused by Updike "to wander in and out of the minds and mouths of his protagonists with little apparent concern or control," making of them mere "vehicles for Updike's dislike of a squalid life world" (Simpson, 2008, p. 218). If the terrorist-to-be Ahmad is constructed indeed as the mechanical voice for jihadist clichés, his sixty-three-year-old Jewish tutor Jack Levy is, according to Simpson, "the flag-bearer for a middle-life crisis narrative (If sixty-three seems late for this, we should not miss the moment where he is able, given the right woman, to manage a second orgasm in fairly short order" (p. 218).

If we share the new historicist lines of thought that literary texts do not just reflect the real world but they are actually vehicles to perpetuate certain ideographs into it, Updike's *Terrorist* is certainly a weapon. The novel exudes a full catalogue of prejudices: firstly, certain whiff of class-consciousness can be perceived when Updike describes the post-9/11 security staffing of airports as evidence that "a dusky underclass has been given tyrannical power" (Updike, 2006, p. 46); secondly, tints of sexism are omnipresent in the novel, because if the male figures are portrayed as either sex-obsessed or radical ascetics, they are treated more kindly than the women in it. As Simpson points out, "The misogyny that has Jack's wife Beth "giving off too much heat through her bubbler" (Updike, 2006, p. 20), or when her sister Hermione is described as having a "sallow spinster skin" (p. 48), or more bizarrely, when Updike

imagines Theresa Mulloy's [Ahmad's mother] pubic hair above the panty-line as "like the head of an impatiently poured beer" (p. 162), all smacks not so much of dramatic narration as dyspeptic authorial obsession" (Simpson, 2008, p. 219). Following this same line of criticism, Melnick remarks in *9/11 Culture* that "few working male artists reach the level of misogyny that characterizes Updike's work" (Melnick, 2009, p. 136). On how the question of race is wrongly conveyed in the novel, if the journalist Amitav Ghosh questioned in the *Washington Post* the "accidental" implausibility of the "brown" characters, it is Melnick again who addresses the same issue in the following terms:

> When the desperate-to seem relevant novelist John Updike (2006) tried to implement some comparative racial group shorthand in his wretched snatched-from-the-headlines novel *Terrorist*, this came off as perfunctory at best, explicitly racist at worst. With a cast that included cardboard cutouts of a tortured half-Arab, an oversexed African American teenager, and an embittered but noble Jew, Updike revealed mostly that the new math of race relations in the United States after 9/11 held little real weight for him. (Melnick, 2009, p. 121)

At this point, we could wonder why a novel so negatively received by both the press and the academia was such a success in the libraries, because it was actually one of the most sold 9/11 fictional works considered in this project, remaining four weeks in the top ten of the *New York Times* best-seller list. This controversial literary phenomenon was addressed by the journalist Bryan Appleyard in the *Times*:

> Terrorist, John Updike's latest novel, has sold more copies in the United States than any novel of his since Couples in 1968. About 120,000 hardbacks are in print; recent Updikes have been running at 30,000-40,000. There has been so much fuss about the book that his publishers actually persuaded the 74-year-old author to go on a publicity tour, the first time he has agreed to go "on the road" for 16 years. (Appleyard, 2006)

After commenting on the negative reception of the novel by some critics, Appleyard reaches the conclusion that "The public enthusiasm for the book is, I think, a matter that lies far beyond the terms of critical discourse. Since 9/11, the Americans have

been seeking authoritative voices to tell them what is going on" (Appleyard, 2006). Something must not be working well when such indoctrination comes from a novel which addresses 9/11 subsidiarily yet in plain view so heavily loaded with prejudices of all colors and genders.

It could be interesting to consider here what such authoritative voice argues about 9/11 in his non-fictional writing, as for example when Updike wondered in a "Talk of the Town" essay in the *New Yorker* how

> Determined men who have transposed their own lives to a martyr's afterlife can still inflict an amount of destruction that defies belief. *War is conducted with a fury that requires abstraction*… Walking around Brooklyn Heights that afternoon, as ash drifted in the air and cars were few and open-air lunches continued as usual on Montague Street, renewed the impression that, with all its failings, *this is a country worth fighting for*. (Updike, 2001) [emphasis added]

Not too much abstraction is required to realize how *Terrorist*'s protagonist Ahmad does not seem the only one who gets elated by the contemplation of American bits of ordinary life in the street, notwithstanding its failures. Updike's instant identification here of the terrorist attack with the term "war," together with his final warmongering and patriotic call "This is a country worth fighting for," confirm how the accustomed authoritative voices do not seem the appropriate *locus* to be revered in search for some unprejudiced explanations regarding the 9/11 attacks' causes.

Chapter 8

Martin Amis's "The Last Days of Muhammad Atta": Racism in the Guise of Fiction

"I was once asked: 'Are you an Islamophobe?' And the answer is no. What I am is an Islamismophobe –that is, opposed to militant Islam –. My slogan on that distinction is 'We respect Muhammad. We do not respect Muhammad Atta.'" With these words Martin Amis responded to the *New York Times* journalist Rachel Donadio in relation to the critiques he had received and which accused him of Islamophobic (Donadio, 2008). It does not seem a bad choice to start the analysis of Amis's short story "The Last Days of Muhammad Atta" (2006) in the light of this remark, leaving for later discussion his supposed "respect" for Islam and Muhammad, and the interrogation of who Amis refers to with that "we" in "We respect... We do not respect..."

"The Last Days of Muhammad Atta" is one of the few literary pieces that approached the events of September 11, 2001, from the presumed point of view of one of the terrorists.[32] The story opens with the 9/11 Commission's factual lack of evidential explanation for why Muhammad Atta and Abdulaziz al-Omari drove to Portland, Maine, from Boston on the morning of September 10, only to return to Logan, Boston, on Flight 5930 on the morning of September 11. Amis imagines in his story one possible explanation for this mysterious one-day trip to Portland, and the whole narrative is conducted through the perspective of Muhammad Atta, who is presented in a constant physical torment. It was not necessary that Amis corroborated in his initial "slogan" his disrespect for the figure of Atta, as it is perceived in plain

[32] Though I well know that Amis is a British writer and that the British attitude over the whole issue is not coterminous with the official American one, Amis's outstanding canonical position in the US as "the postmodern Anglo-Saxon writer" has led me to consider his work.

view throughout the varied scatological misfortunes to which Atta is permanently submitted in Amis's story as it will be evidenced in this chapter.

Atta starts his day with "the ordeal of excretion" and "the torment of depilation" (Amis, 2006, p. 153); in the shower, after "removing a hair from the bar of soap," the water turned in an instant "from a tepid trickle to a molten blast; and as he struggled from the stall, he trod on a leaking shampoo sachet and felt heavily and sharply on his coccyx. He had to kick himself out through the steam, and rasped his head on the shower's serrated metal stir" (p. 153); when he dried himself with the towel, he caught "a hangnail in its shine" and

> ...emitting a sigh of unqualified grimness, he crouched on the bowl…he had not moved his bowels since May…there was a solemn mound where his abdominals used to be... Nor was it the only sequela. He had a feverish and unvarying ache, not in his gut but in his lower back, his pelvic saddle and his scrotum. Every few minutes he was required to wait out an interlude of nausea, while disused gastric juices bubbled up in the sump of his throat. His breath smelled like a blighted river." (p. 153)

Atta's physical agony in Amis's story continues when, after putting on his clothes, he realizes that, while shaving, he

> had cut himself on the lip (the lower); with surprisingly speed the gash had settled into a convincing imitation of a cold sore. Much less unusually, he had also nicked the fleshy volute of his right nostril, releasing an apparently endless supply of blood; he kept having to get up and fetch more tissues, leaving behind him a paper trail of the stanched gouts. (p. 153)

During Atta's drive to Portland International Jetport,

> the headache began. In recent months he had become something of a connoisseur of headaches. And yet those earlier headaches, it now seemed, were barely worth the name: *this* was what a headache was. At first, he attributed its virulence to his misadventure in the shower stall; but then the pain pushed forward over his crown and established itself, like an electric eel, from ear to ear, then form eye to eye – and then both. He had two headaches, not one; and they were apparently at war… Suddenly his vision became pixellated with little swarms of blind spots. So it was then asked of him to pull over and tell an astonished Abdulaziz to take the wheel. (p. 156) [emphasis added by the author]

Just before boarding,

> another gust of nausea gathered about Muhammad Atta, like a host of tiny myrmidons. He waited for them to move on, but they did not do so, and, instead coagulated in his craw. Muhammad Atta went to the men's room and released a fathom of bilious green. He was still wiping his foul mouth as he walked out on to the tarmac and climbed the trembling metal steps." (p. 157)

After changing in Logan airport to the plane which Atta would eventually hijack,

> He hadn't even reached his seat when it hit him. It came with great purity of address, replacing everything else in his stretched sensorium. Even his headache, while not actually taking his leave, immediately stepped aside, almost with a flourish to accommodate the new guest. It was a feeling that had a abandoned him for ever, he thought, four months ago – but now it was back… neither could drown the popping, the groaning, the creaking, as of a dungeon door to a inner sanctum – the ungainsayable anger of his bowels. So now he sat gripping the armrest of 8D as the coach of passengers filed by… He waited, rose, and with gruelling nonchalance, his buttocks clenched, sauntered forward. All three toilets claimed to be occupied. They were not occupied, he knew… the toilets were locked… he returned to 8D… So far, he thought, this is the worst day of my life – provably the worst day. In his head, the weary fight between the vermin was finished; one was dying, and was now being disgustingly eaten by the other. And his loins, between them, were contriving for him something very close to the sensation of anal rape. (p. 161-62)

Finally, "when he [Atta] came clattering in over the struts and slats of Manhattan… the need to shit felt right and good as his destination surged towards him" (p. 163).

All this Amis's verbal diarrhoea – never more appropriate the term – in relation to bodily functions intends in principle to be justified in order to suit Atta's particular "mind-body problem": the other hijackers are said in the story to have achieved "sublimation" by means of "jihadi ardour; and their bodies had been convinced by this arrangement" (p. 154); however, "Muhammad Atta's body," according to Amis, "had not gone along with it. He wasn't like the others" – this last remark is repeated up to three times in different moments in the story – and "he [Atta] was doing what he was doing for the core reason and for the core reason only" (p. 154). It seems that the recurrence *ad nauseam* of the inelegant semantic field to describe Atta's afflictions is used as a means to differentiate him from the other terrorists regarding their and his presumed motivations for the attack. Atta's

"fantastically acute" difficulty in separating his mind form his body emphasizes that his terrorist actions are motivated only by a "core reason" (p. 154) which we will later approach as it is revealed towards the end of the story.

Imagining an extremely stomached and headached Atta in constant and terrible pain during the last hours of his last day, even to the point of coming almost blind while driving, seems also part of some sort of moral punishment on the part of the author. The imposed penalty gets reinforced at the end of the story, as the narrative concludes in the same way it begins, that is, with Muhammad Atta re-living again and again "the worst day of his life" in a supposed infinite cycle, as the hair in the soap foreshadowed.

In the story, Atta is not just tortured by Amis's attributed physical pain but he also gets humiliated by the excremental nature of its condition. The picture of a constipated Atta with his "buttocks clenched" and feeling "something very close to the sensation of anal rape" attempts indeed to debase and degrade his figure using the same rhetoric that some posters which appeared in the days after 9/11 in midtown Manhattan, and which portrayed a caricature of Osama Bin Laden being anally penetrated by the Empire State Building with a legend reading: "So you like skyscrapers, huh, bitch?" In "Monster, Terrorist, Fag" (2002), Puar and Rai recall this particular poster and other similar media manifestations which demonstrate how often a popular discursive way to avenge the terrorist attacks was to humiliate the terrorists by questioning their "masculinity" (Puar and Rai, 2002, p. 136). In the case of Amis's story, it seems very appropriate to refer again to Asad's *On Suicide Bombing* (2007) when he assures that "some typical explanations of the suicide bomber tell us more about the Western author's assumptions than they do about what is ostensibly being explained (Asad, 2007, p. 42). Amis's declared disrespect for Muhammad Atta does

not find any better way to dishonor him than attacking his masculinity by submitting Atta to the "sensation of anal rape," which seems to appoint more to Amis's own heteronormative fears rather than to the terrorist's described physical problems.

Apart from this bodily torture to which Atta is subjected by Amis in Atta's last fictional day, there are some other inner characteristics which are also attached to his persona in the story, "hatred" being the most remarkable among them. Atta is said in the Amis's story to hate music and to hate laughter (Amis, 2006, p. 155). Actually, "he had always hated music; all of it, even the most emollient melody had entered his mind as pain" (p. 158). Atta's "detestation of everything," as it is expressed in the story, is occasionally linked with his name, Atta, as if pronounced <ei-tte^{r} >, like "hater," "the name he journeyed under, itself like a promise of revenge" (p. 153). However, it is Atta's "face" which gets the main attention several times in Amis's story as if it were intrinsically attached to his "attributed" inner hatred for everything, included himself. For example, to Amis's Atta, the worst part of his morning is when he has to shave himself: "Shaving was the worst because it necessarily involved him in the contemplation of his face… his face was somehow incontinent… The detestation, the detestation of everything, was being sculpted on it, from within" (p. 153). At another moment in the story, when Atta boards the American Airlines plane in Logan, he is said to observe how he has timed the attack right: "He felt he had timed it about right. (And his face had timed it about right.) Because he couldn't possibly survive another day of the all-inclusive detestation – of the pan-anathema. This feeling had been his familiar since the age of twelve or thirteen" (p. 161). The figure of Atta is therefore ascribed in the story with an "all-inclusive" hate for everything, which has accompanied him since he was a child and which, he thinks, gets ostensibly manifested in his face. However, it is not Atta the only one in the story

who reads his face in such a manner, as it occurs when Atta remembers how he was selected by the Sheik to be the leading terrorist of his group:

> Only one human being had been taken pleasure from setting eyes on him, and that was the Sheikh. It had happened in their introductory meeting, in Kahandar – where within a matter of minutes, the Sheikh had appointed him operation leader. Muhammad Atta had known that the first thing he would be asked was whether he was prepared to die. But the Sheikh was smiling, almost with eyes of love, when he said it. "The question isn't necessary," he began. "I see the answer in your face." (p. 153)

This – Amis's – idea that Atta's misery and hatred is perceptible in his face gets repeated in the story when Atta expresses his amazement regarding how

> he was still allowed to walk the streets, let alone enter a building or board a plane. Another day, one more day, and they wouldn't let him… The profiling wouldn't need to be racial; it would be facial, merely. No same man or woman would ever agree to be confined in his vicinity. With this face, growing more gangrenous by the day… (p. 153)

Two elements in this passage require special attention: firstly, how once again, the figure of the terrorist is linked to the semantic field of illness. If we already saw in Chapter Seven how the 9/11 theorist Jean Baudrillard in *The Spirit of Terrorism* (2001) described both terrorism and Islam as "viruses" (Baudrillard, 2002, p. 10,15), it is now Amis who, through his fictional piece, links the terrorist with headaches, constipation, and the more serious "gangrene"; secondly, the other point to be remarked is when fictional Atta ironically argues in the passage that the profiling "wouldn't need to be racial" but "facial, merely." Indeed, it is not the figure of Atta's internal voice that the reader has accessed to, but Amis's own personal opinions on the matter, as it is evidenced by his remarks in the polemic interview to the *Times of London* in August 2006 – only four months after the first publication of "The Last Days of Muhammad Atta" in the *New Yorker* on April 24, 2006:

> There's a definite urge – don't you have it? – to say, 'The Muslim community will have to suffer until it gets its house in order'. What sort of suffering? Not letting them travel. Deportation – further down the road. Curtailing of freedoms. Strip-searching people who *look like* they're form the Middle East

> or from Pakistan… Discriminatory stuff, until it hurts the whole community and they start getting tough with their children. (Soar, 2007) [emphasis added]

It is this sort of public remarks on the part of a reputed literary figure which in my view hurt "the whole community" of human beings. I wonder what Amis understands for "not being an Islamophobe" after declaring that "The Muslim community will have to suffer discriminatory stuff." Moreover, the strip-searching that Amis advocates as a form of humiliation is not limited to Muslims but to whoever "looks like" Middle Easterner or Pakistani. Therefore, it is the "looks" which counts to Amis, the "face" as in the story on Atta. Amis's derogatory remarks remained almost uncontested until January 2007 when they were cited by Daniel Soar in his review of Amis's novel *House of Meetings* for the *London Review of Books*. However, the scandal exploded soon after, when the literary theorist and academic Terry Eagleton picked up Amis's comments to start his new introduction to the 2007 reissue of his 1991 book *Ideology: An Introduction*. Eagleton described Amis's remarks as

> Not the ramblings of a British National Party thug, but the reflections of the novelist Martin Amis, leading luminary of the English metropolitan literary world. There might, perhaps, be a genetic excuse for this squalid mixture of bile and hysteria: Amis's father Kingsley, after all, was a racist anti-Semitic boor, a drink-sodden, self-hating reviler of women, gays and liberals, and Amis *fils* has clearly learnt more from him than how to turn a shapely phrase. (Eagleton, 2007, p. x) [emphasis added by the author]

The Amis-Eagleton donnybrook got worse and "made the papers." Rachel Donadio traced the scandal back for the *New York Times*: On October 7, 2007, the *Sunday Times* published an article on the issue titled "The Aging Punk of Lit Crit Still Knows How to Spit." On October 11, Elizabeth Jane Howard, British writer and also Kingsley Amis's second wife and Martin Amis's step-mother, affirmed in the *Daily Mail*: "I have never even heard of this man Eagleton. But he seems to be a rather lethal combination of having been a Roman Catholic and become a Marxist ... He

strikes me as like a spitting cobra – if you get within his range he'll unleash some poison" (Levy, 2007); Colin Howard, Elizabeth Jane's brother and Kingsley Amis's brother-in-law also defended his nephew-in-law and attacked Eagleton in the *Daily Mail* too: "I wonder if everything Prof Eagleton writes is as lazy and silly as his attacks on Kingsley and Martin Amis?" (Levy, 2007).

It was in the *Guardian* where Eagleton complained of a "media conspiracy" against him, adding that there was something "stomach-churning" about seeing Amis and other "champions of a civilization that for centuries has wreaked untold carnage throughout the world shrieking for illegal measures when they find themselves for the first time on the sticky end of the same treatment" (Eagleton, 2007). In a letter to the *Guardian*, Amis responded the attack and called Eagleton "a marooned ideologue… I wasn't 'advocating' anything. I was conversationally describing an urge – an urge than soon wore off… He [Eagleton] has submitted to an unworthy combination of venom and sloth. Can I ask him in a collegial spirit, to shut up about it?" (Amis, 2007).

The media report of the affair then went beyond the battle between the Marxist critic and the Amis dynasty, and the coverage began to be divided along political lines, with Eagleton finding defenders on the left and Amis on the right. In the *Independent*, the columnist Yasmin Alibhai-Brown wrote that Amis was a "threat to the kind of society I stand up for. He is with the beasts pounding the back door, the Muslim-baiters and haters" (Alibhai-Brown, 2009). On November 19, 2007, the *Guardian* ran the prominent headline "Martin Amis and the New Racism" accompanied by the essay "Shame on Us," written by the novelist and screenwriter Ronan Bennett, in which Bennett exposed that "Amis's views are the symptomatic of a much wider and deeper hostility to Islam and intolerance to otherness… Amis got

away with as odious an outburst of racist sentiment as any public figure has made in this country for a very long time" (Bennett, 2007). Two days later, on November 21, the novelist Ian McEwan defended his close friend Amis in a letter to the *Guardian*: "When you ask a novelist his or her view of the world… you may not like what you hear, but reasoned debate is the appropriate response, not vilification… I wonder whether Ronan Bennett would care to expend so much of his rhetorical might excoriating at similar length the thugs who murdered – in the name of their religion – their fellow citizens in London in 2005" (McEwan, 2007). It seems that things calmed down a bit when, on a phone interview with Rachel Donadio for the *New York Times*, Martin Amis conceded that his original comments in the *Times* were "ill-considered," but held fast to the uneasiness that informed them. "When I made this rather stupid suggestion, or talked about the urge to make the stupid suggestion to make the Muslims put their house in order, I was at the peak of my anger" about the aborted plan to blow up airlines. "Everyone else's anger gets respected all over the place but not that of a normally very peaceful British novelist" (Donadio, 2008).

On January 2008, more than a year and a half after his initial, polemic, yet finally acknowledged "ill-considered" remarks in the *Times*, Martin Amis published a collection of essays on 9/11 titled *The Second Plane* which also included the short story "The Last Days of Muhammad Atta" inside the volume. In one of the essays, "Terror and Boredom: The Dependent Mind," Amis addressed again the profiling and strip-searching issues in the following terms:

> In July 2005 I flew from Montevideo to New York – and from winter to summer – with my six-year-old daughter and her eight-year-old sister… we proceed to security… I stood for half an hour at the counter while the official methodically and solemnly searched her carry-on rucksack… I wanted to say something like, 'Even Islamists have not yet started to blow up their own families on aeroplanes. So please, desist until they do. Oh yeah: and stick, for now, to young men who *look like* they're from the Middle East.' (Amis, 2008, p. 76) [emphasis added].

I do not know how ill-considered are this time Amis's written, edited, and published remarks, yet at plain sight he is advocating once again to "stick" to people who "look like" they're from the Middle East. The publication of Amis's volume of essays about 9/11 re-opened again the public debate in the media regarding his controversial opinions about "facial profiling" as the proper way to increase the citizen's security. What is most disturbing about this "stick to people who look like" thesis, argued twice by Amis, is its generalizing nature. As Rachel Donadio questions in the *New York Times*, Amis's comments "did conflate the radical Islamist minority and the non-violent majority" (Donadio, 2008). The literary critic of the *New York Times* Michiko Kakutani, in her review of Amis's *The Second Plane*, also observes this Amis's generalizing tendency, remarking how "he [Amis] makes gross generalizations about the 'extreme incuriosity of Islamic culture,' and the differences between Sunnis and Shias like 'The Sunni are more legalistic. The Shia are dreamier and more poetic and emotional.'" (Kakutani, 2008). Terry Eagleton, in his new preface to the 2007 reissue of *Ideology: an Introduction*, confirmed how Amis, through such comments on "face profiling," "is not recommending such tactics for criminal or suspects only; he is recommending them as a way of humiliating and insulting certain kinds of men and women at random" (Eagleton, 2007, p. xi). The humiliating expedition that Amis argues for through his non-fiction is personified and acquires a concrete face in his fictional production in the concrete portrait he makes of the horribly constipated Atta. The inclusion of the short story "The Last Days of Mohammad" in Amis's book of essays also points to the fact that Amis's fictional piece is not but one more device of the discriminatory campaign Amis advocates so fervently.

Defending himself from the accusation of being "racist," a label to which he was attached by part of the media after his polemic remarks, Amis declared that he was "a passionate multiracialist and a very poor multiculturalist… In England, we've infantilized ourselves, stupefied ourselves, through a kind of sentimental multiculturalism… It's not about race, it's about ideology" (Donadio, 2008). And indeed, it is precisely an ideological crusade what Amis's anti-Islamic project consists of, yet I still wonder how someone's ideology can be detected just by the looks of his or her "colored" face. Eagleton picked Amis's remarks precisely to introduce his own study of the concept of "ideology" while assuring that Amis, through his comments, was speaking "of the need for a new 'Westernism,' which would presumably involve promoting so-called Western values as an aggressive, coherent, self-conscious ideological project" (Eagleton, 2007, p. xvii). I do not doubt that the imposition of Western culture over the rest is part of Amis's ideological enterprise, as it is evidenced by his self-recognized "poor multiculturalism." As Eagleton suggests, the assumption which underlies Amis's comments is "that civilization and violence are antithetical, and that the couplet can be roughly translated into West and East" (Eagleton, 2007, p. xii). However, it is not only the dangerous ideological connotations applied by Amis to the West-East binomial which must be questioned, but also Amis's evident racial prejudices despite his self-declared "passionate multiracialism." Amis's ethnic animosities can be observed in plain view in his notorious 2006 interview, wherein he also remarked: "They are gaining on us demographically at a huge rate. A quarter of humanity now, and by 2025 they'll be a third. Italy's is down to 1.1 child per woman. We're just being outnumbered" (Amis, 2006). On this issue of "being outnumbered" Amis provided more data in his essay "Demographics" (2008), stating that "not a single Western Europe country is

procreating at the 'replacement rate' of 2.1 births per woman… A depopulated and simplified Europe might be tenable in a world without enmity and predation. And that is not our world. The birth rate is 6.76 in Somalia, 6.69 in Afghanistan, and 6.58 in Yemen" (Amis, 2008, p. 156). Indeed, it is not any ideology at all but a place of origin what Amis is attacking here through his fears of being racially "outnumbered."

Moreover, Amis's religious prejudices despite his self-declared "not Islamophobia" are also observable through remarks like "The Muslim community will have to suffer…" (Donadio, 2008). Amis declares himself a non-believer and proclaims the irrationality of religion, leaning heavily on the works of Christopher Hitchens and Sam Harris. Yet it is in his own atheist fashion in which Amis portraits his protagonist in "The Last Days of Muhammad Atta." Indeed, fictional Atta is depicted by Amis as a non-believer like himself. The figure of Atta starts the story acknowledging that he has included in his testament "a fair amount of formulaic sanctimony. Any old thing would do" (Amis, 2006, p. 154). Later on, he is said to be "not religious" and "not even political," and he declares that he is a fundamentalist because it suits his personality, affirming that "if you took away all the rubbish about faith, then fundamentalism suited his character" (p. 154). The narrative constantly insists on Atta's self-perceived difference between himself and his terrorist colleagues regarding the matter of faith. Fictional Atta's physical miseries are said to be indebted to the "religious ardor" he precisely lacks. The figure of Atta states that his mates have "achieved sublimation, by means of jihadi ardour; and their bodies had been convinced by this arrangement and had gone along with it." On the contrary, "Muhammad Atta's body had not gone along with it," and he repeats up to four times in various moments in the story that he is going to perpetrate the terrorist attack "for the core reason, and for the core reason only" (p. 154).

The core reason is revealed almost at the end of the story, when fictional Atta is at the controls of the plane he would eventually crash: "The core reason was of course all the killing – all the putting to death… Here was the primordial secret. No longer closely guarded – no longer well kept. Killing was divine delight" (p. 163). Therefore, it is a psychopathic death-hunger which Amis's story attributes to fictional Atta as the main motivation for his collaboration in the terrorist act. Coincidentally, this mortal voracity matches Amis's own beliefs regarding the Islamic terrorists' motivations. In his non-fictional "Terror and Boredom," while discussing Islamism, Amis assures that "In the twentieth century, *outside Africa*, the only comparable eruptions of *death hunger*, of death-oestrus, were confined to Nazi Germany and Stalinite Kampuchea" (Amis, 2008, p. 82) [emphasis added]. Therefore, it seems that the death-passion attributed by Amis to Atta in the fictional story as the "core reason" for the attacks is exactly the same that Amis assigns to Islamism in his non-fictional essays. Moreover, the inclusion of the whole African continent into the death-hungry group in his – death?– sentence confirms to what extent Martin Amis so easily incurs in generalizations as it was underlined Kakutani in her review of Amis's *The Second Plane* (Kakutani, 2008).

While fictional Atta is depicted as death-passionate in the story, he miraculously turns to be deeply attached to "life" at the very end of it: "How very gravely he had underestimated life. His own he had hated, and had wished away… with what grief was he watching it go, imperturbable in its beauty and its power" (Amis, 2006, p. 163). The ending of Amis's story resembles in many elements the final "elated" scene of John Updike's novel *Terrorist* already approached in Chapter Seven. Both narratives conclude with their corresponding terrorist protagonists realizing the "incommensurable" beauty of life. If Ahmad in Updike's *Terrorist* ends

up exchanging his faith for his vision of American life acknowledging that "*These Devils,* Ahmad thinks, *have taken away my God*" (Updike, 2006, p. 310) [emphasis added by the author], Martin Amis's Atta also expresses how he is ultimately seduced by "unignorable conclusions, imposed from without" referring to his late attraction to the American life so much responsible for his crisis of faith (Amis, 2006, p. 163). Both Amis and Updike employ free indirect style to introduce the reader into the mind of their terrorist protagonists, all in order to end their narratives by promoting the equations "West is Life" and "Islam is death." However, although both terrorist protagonists' death thirst is redeemed by the beauty of "Western" way of life, Ahmad's life is finally saved by Updike, while Amis's Atta is condemned to die day after day as part of the author's all-inclusive torture to which he subjects his protagonist.

Another aspect which is also present in both Updike's *Terrorist* and Amis's "The Last Days of Muhammad Atta" is the link established within these works between Islamic terrorism and sexual frustration. In the case of Amis's short story, fictional Atta confirms that no "human being had taken obvious pleasure from setting eyes on him" but the Sheikh (Amis, 2006, p. 153). If we already saw that the figure of Atta is presented in the story as a "hater" of everything himself included, there is someone different from himself to which fictional Atta specially addresses his animadversion: his terrorist colleague Ziad. While the terrorist cell responsible for 9/11 was staying in Hamburg preparing the attack, real Ziad had an affair with a Turkish girl called Aysel. In the story, Amis describes Atta's encounter with Aysel and his feelings towards both Aysel and Ziad in free indirect speech: "Atta had seen Aysel only once (bare legs, bare arms, bare hair), in the medical bookstore in Hamburg, and he had not forgotten her face. Ziad and Aysel were his control

experiment for the life lived by sexual love; and for many months the two of them had peopled his insomnias… he [Atta] kept wondering how their bodies conjoined, how she must open herself up to him" (Amis, 2006, p. 160). Ultimately, it is revealed that Atta's mysterious trip from Boston to Maine on September 10, event which gives origin to the story, is intrinsically related to Atta's envy and hatred towards his "friend." Accordingly, Amis makes Atta do the travel to get some elixir or "holy water" from his imam which would let Atta and not the others off from "burning in hell" for committing suicide. Before boarding, Atta calls Ziad and tells him about his possession of the potion, just to remind Ziad that he "will burn with jet fuel for eternity… 'there may be some delay before you get those brides of light. Perhaps you should have settled for your German nudist. Goodbye, Ziad'… To discountenance Ziad, to send him to his death with a heart full of doubt: *this* was the reason for the journey to Maine" (Amis, 2006, p. 160-61) [emphasis added by the author].

If fictional Atta's sexual frustration and envy for a terrorist colleague who practices sex provide the argumentative key to Amis's story, frustrated male lust is also a fundamental concept in Amis's non-fictional explanations for the motivations behind the 9/11 terrorist attacks. In one of his essays included in the volume *The Second Plane*, Amis assures that "the dominion of the male is Koranic" and that "when challenged or affronted, the believer's response is hormonal" (Amis, 2008, p. 90-91). When reviewing this Amis's book of 9/11 essays, various critics have underlined this Amis's tendency to prioritize and overrate "frustrated lust" among the rest of the terrorists' plausible motivations. For example, Kakutani remarks how to Amis, the "Islamist war on the West" seems "rooted in sexual frustration" (Kakutani, 2008). Leon Wieseltier also observes in the *New York Times* that

> Among the many theories about Islamism and Islamist terror that appears in these pages [*The Second Plane*], the writer's [Amis's] favorite is the carnal

> one: he believes that 2,992 more people would be alive today if 19 Middle Easter men had only found some satisfaction of the flesh… he [Amis] chooses to impute the malignity in the terrorist's heart to lust. More precisely, to frustrated lust; still more precisely, to frustrated male lust." (Wieseltier, 2008)

Amis himself declared in the introduction to his volume of essays that "geopolitics may not be my natural subject, but masculinity is" (Amis, 2008, p. x). In the light of this remark, fictional Atta's lust for his friend's girl and his "close to anal rape" sensations do not seem so out of context, yet they respond more to the author's self-declared "natural subject" than to the terrorist universe approached by him.

In conclusion, Amis's fictional depiction of Muhammad Atta as a non-believer driven by a hormonal mind, not only does match Amis's non-fictional reflections on Islamic terrorism, but it also seems to mimic Amis's own atheist and "masculine" concerns. I totally agree with Kumar when he remarks in his analysis of "The Last Days of Muhammad Atta" that

> The narrative's purported aim is to provide an insight into the mind of a mass murderer. What really happens while reading this story is that Muhammad Atta is no longer the subject of your attention–instead, Martin Amis is. (Note to Amis: It would have been more honest to write a memoir if you thought September 11 or the First World War or Hiroshima was all about you. (Kumar, 2008)

Indeed, the quintessential "core reason" of Amis's short story "The Last Days of Muhammad Atta" gets definitively and fully revealed when Amis reaches the conclusion that the Islamist war on the West is essentially due to "a kind of thwarted narcissism" (Amis, 2008, p. 63). Amis could not have expressed his self any better.

Chapter 9

Andre Dubus III's *The Garden of Last Days*: Terrorists as Perverts

A few days after 9/11, CBS News reported that the four terrorists who hijacked and crashed American Airlines Flight 11 spent part of the night of September 10, 2001, in a strip club called The Pink Pony located in Daytona Beach, Florida. The club manager informed the FBI that the four men spent $200 to $300 apiece on lap dances and drinks leaving a copy of the Quran forgotten at the club (Farrington, 2001). The *Boston Globe* also revealed that one member of this same group of terrorists who hijacked American 11 called and contracted escort services that same night (Doidge, 2001).

Andre Dubus III's novel *The Garden of Last Days* (2008) introduces the reader into the universe of strip clubs through multiple narrators, as the narrative voice shifts at the beginning of each of the 110 chapters from one character to another, providing different points of view on the night business. Most of the chapters are narrated by April, the strip girl protagonist known as Spring inside the club. However, it is also possible to listen to many other voices in the novel: the security man and floor host Lonnie, who represents the masculine stereotype of the tough guy with a "knockout punch" (Dubus, 2008, p. 16) yet secretly in love with April; A.J. Corey, the recently divorced and usual client of the club who is expelled from it for holding hands with one of the strippers; Jean, April's seventy-one-year-old lonely neighbor who envies April for having a child who is usually attended by Jean at night while April works at the club, except for the night narrated in the novel; and even April's three-year-old daughter, Franny, gets lost at the club and narrates herself her adventure with a vocabulary uncharacteristic of her age, like when the baby describes

"shinny necklaces and pretty bracelets" and the knobs of the doors "round and gold metal" like "big jewellery" (p. 126); finally, another occasional narrator is Deena, A.J's ex-wife who, addicted to magazines about TV stars, paints her nails a different color every week.

With such myriad of view points, the novel attempts to provide a multiple-perspective portrait of different lonely people who populate America today. However, what links this novel to our concern is the character of Bassam, one of the 9/11 terrorists who attends the club the night in question and narrates 21 out of the 110 chapters of the novel, by the way, a cipher not chosen at random as 110 were the number of stores of each of the Twin Towers. The author introduces the readers into Bassam's mind through free indirect style, and in the chapters narrated by Bassam, his inner monologues are full of Arabic words transliterated into Latin alphabet to reinforce the impression that we as readers are getting access to the terrorist's stream of thoughts.

The most prominent trait of personality attached to the figure of the terrorist in the novel is his lascivious mind. Lustful thoughts appear at any opportunity in spite of his efforts, and he justifies himself by blaming others for his own sexual desire. The first opportunity to listen to Bassam is in the second chapter, which he opens by narrating the differences according to him between Florida, where he is now, and his place of origin, Khamis Mushayt in Saudi Arabia. Bassam

> … passes a small park, its palm and thorn trees which remind him of home. But nothing else does… he passes men and women sitting at outdoor tables, laughing and smoking and drinking. He passes a young couple… the woman is blond, an American whore, but still Bassam looks twice more at her in his rearview, his heart pushing hungrily inside his chest, his mouth suddenly dry for he knows where he is going." (p. 23)

The first picture that we as readers get of Bassam is that he is a sort of Pavlov's dog virtually drooling before the "American blond" stimulus in his way to

the "meat" that waits for him in the strip club he is going to. After "looking twice" more at her, Bassam cannot but remember when he saw women uncovered for the first time,

> … and not simply the arms but their legs as well, their bellies and half of their nuhood, their faces painted heavily…
> "Don't look, brothers," said Imad. "Do not look at these jinn."
> But you did Bassam. You looked at their nuhood, and their backsides, you heard their talk and their laughter and you watched them walk in their high shoes, and surely this was the first of many temptations from Shaytan himself. But you were steadfast... performed your ablutions…and you tried to ignore the noise outside the walls… the laugher of uncovered women who in the kingdom would be stoned to death. (p. 24)

Comparing his former experiences in watching women with his situation today, Bassam acknowledges that in the United States his lust for women

> … has only grown worse… Bassam would make himself forget the young women… talking and laughing, their long blond hair, their bare legs and feet, their uncovered faces looking directly at whomever they wished to, including him. He made himself think of the companions reserved for him and his brothers in Jannah, Insha'Allah, not these dirty kufar who would laughingly pull him between their legs straight to the eternal fire. (p. 24-25)

The portrait that the novel offers of the figure of the Islamic terrorist is clearly that of a sexually obsessed guy who can hardly control his animal instincts except by either taking refuge in the performance of his ablutions or fantasizing with all the women who are supposedly waiting for him in the afterlife.

This misrepresentation of the 9/11 terrorists in which sexual pleasure becomes the quintessential motivation for committing terrorist acts turned out to be very common both in fictional and non-fictional post-9/11 discourses. For example, the CBS's program *60 Minutes* aired an interview carried out by the reporter Bob Simon to Hamas operative Muhammad Abu Wardeh (Feldner, 2001). Wardeh's task consisted on recruiting terrorists for suicide bombings in Israel. When he explained how he convinced a terrorist to do so, his words were translated into English subtitles by CBS as follows: "I described to him how God would compensate the sacrificing…

If you become a martyr, God will give you 70 virgins, 70 wives and everlasting happiness" (Feldner, 2001). Some Muslim leaders contended that the CBS's English subtitles did not match the actual Arabic words used by the terrorist, and wrote to *60 minutes* demanding an apology and some time on the show for Islamic scholars to explain the religion's true teachings regarding violence and martyrdom. Among these scholars was Professor Hathout, who assured that the Arabic word *hur'ayn*, translated by CBS as "virgins," has in fact no sexual connotation or gender. Hathout suggested that a more appropriate translation would be "angel" or "heavenly being." Salaam Al-Maryati, the Executive Director of MPAC – Muslim Public Affairs Council – declared that "For Palestinians, this [terrorism] is about fighting aggression and occupation, not about opportunities for sexual fantasies" (Feldner, 2001). Nevertheless, CBS said its Arabic experts insisted on the actuality of CBS's translations, and the "70-72 virgins" issue remained the easiest target when looking for motivations for the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The "virgins" argument, based on an alleged sexual and mental pathology attributed to the terrorists became indeed much more common than other sort of explanations grounded on former political, military or economic US and Israel's policies in Palestine and other countries in the Middle East.[33]

Those "sexual fantasies" that Al-Maryati denounces and describes as not the place to look for the terrorists' stimulus are precisely the ones in which Bassam in Dubus's *The Garden of Last Days* takes refuge into. He is constantly attempting not to think of the "American whores" who are always tempting him, and whom he blames for his own sexual desire. Regarding this last aspect of blaming women for his own appetites, Bassam's attitude is made clear by his comments: for example, when

[33] The "virgins" rhetoric is exactly the one used in Paul Chadwick's comic "Sacrifice," already analyzed in Chapter Four. When the comic describes the passengers of the United 93 flight, it underlines that "they weren't brainwashed to expect virgins feeding them in the afterlife" (15).

he sees a strip girl nude and almost forgets "the sin that will condemn her" (Dubus, 2008, p. 58); or when he describes women and his attraction for them as if he were "bleeding in the Red Sea, sharks smelling his blood from kilometers away" (p. 259). Indeed, the fact that Bassam blames women is made even much more evident when Bassam's attitude gets contrasted in the novel with Lonnie's, the security tough guy. Lonnie, who is in love with the strip girl April, tells her about Bassam: "They blame you for their own weakness, April. I can't stand those people" (p. 331).

The representation of Bassam's behavior towards women in the novel is devastating. Firstly, we can observe him showing rudeness to different women at the beginning of the novel. For instance, when he orders a drink to a female server in the club and "waves her away. He waves her away and feels like a king. The power of a man in this world who cares about this world…" (p. 60); or when he orders April to bring him more drinks: "'And Brandy or cognac or what you call that.' He handed her two bills. 'Quickly.' Usually she wouldn't take a command like this from anyone; no please, no tease. But with this one she did" (p. 82); or when Bassam tells Retro, another strip girl: "I buy you too…Open your legs," to which Retro answers "Ask nice, honey" (p. 115,153). As the novel advances, Bassam starts thinking how easy it would be to kill every woman he meets. He has such thoughts with an old waitress who serves him the breakfast: "'Sir? Would you care for coffee?'… She is older than the others. Lines in her face she covers with cosmetics, her hair dry, blond when it is not blond. How easy to kill her, to slaughter her like a goat" (p. 379); but also with the call girl he and another terrorist contact: "She smiles once more and pushes the money into her purse. How easy it would be to kill her now" (p. 451).

It is not only Bassam who shows this killing instinct towards women in the novel. Imad, one of his terrorist mates, feels exactly the same when he and his group

enroll in a gym and their instructor turns to be a woman: “he listened to the young trainer talk as if deciding the most efficient way to kill her” (p. 253).

When the strip dancer Spring meets Bassam, and after acknowledging how “her little foreign customer had a meanness in him she could feel” (p. 82), Bassam’s accent makes April remember when she worked as a waitress at a Subway shop making sandwiches, and how Fuad, her Arab ex-boss, used to find “an excuse to come behind the counter and pretend to look for something, pressing himself against her whenever he could” (p. 98). Therefore, it is not only Bassam’s behavior towards women, but his terrorist colleagues’ too, and also April former boss’s, an Arab, which are evidently contrasted with the courtesy of the rest of “white” American characters in the novel: Lonnie, the security guy who protects the girls form drunk clients, and who always looks at April “right into her face and not at her naked breasts” (p. 16); and A.J. Corey, the thrown out customer who finds April’s daughter in the street and takes care of her as if she were her own daughter.

There are quite a few topics which are approached in the novel in a contradictory way. One of them is the issue of covered or uncovered women. The figure of Bassam is portrayed always complaining about how much “flesh” American women show, therefore, satisfying the stereotype of the “publicly a censor yet privately lustful” individual. We have seen before various examples of how his lascivious facet is underlined. His most censoring side is made obvious when he evaluates the US capitalist society assuring that

> The kufar spend their dirty money on more needless things. And the flesh of women. Exposed on all of them. Even the old wear dresses above their knees, the young in short short pants that can only tempt men. They are nearly naked on the covers of every magazine, on books, on television even when only selling beer. (p. 61)

In fact, the whole group of terrorists represented in the novel responds to such lustful-censor hypocritical pattern, as it gets clearly exposed when they pray together a "supplication of place" before entering into the strip club "*Oh Lord, I ask You the best of this place, and ask You to protect me from its evils.*…" (p. 26) [emphasis added by the author]. However, the contradiction comes when the figure of the protagonist strip girl, Spring, is contrasted with the rest of strippers by emphasizing her "chaste" qualities. When Bassam asks her if "For enough money, you will allow me for touching you anywhere, yes?" she answers: 'No, not me. Go get one of the other girls for that. I don't do that" (p. 172). Spring is in this way differentiated from her desperate colleagues who would do anything for money. Indeed, Spring herself reflects in free indirect style about the covered-uncovered issue:

> Other girls ripped free the Velcro all at once, letting themselves pop out sexy as toast from a toaster… but not Spring; Spring had style all night long…when she lifted her left hand and let that cup fall and dangle, her right breast still covered, and it was funny how they always looked at the naked one only a second or two, their eyes on her hand now over her loosened cup over the other… Why didn't they ever look longer at the naked one? Why was the covered one more interesting now? (p. 66)

It seems that both Bassam and Spring share, although at different levels, a belief in the power of that which is covered. The character of Bassam corroborates Spring's theory regarding how men prefer what is covered to what is not in the passage when he is alone with both strippers Spring and Retro, and the latter shows him her vagina: "'Enough.' The foreigner looked bored with Retro and what she showed him. He stood and pulled out all those hundreds, handing her three. 'More drinks, please.' Retro closed her legs. She stood slowly…" (p. 171)

The Garden of Last Days was not very well received by the critics, in contrast with the author's former novel *House of Sand and Fog* (1999) which was a finalist for the National Book Award for Fiction in 2000. For instance, Jay McInerney, author of

another 9/11 novel titled *The Good Life* (2006), wrote a review of Dubus's *The Garden of Last Days* in the *New York Times* titled "The Devil Wears Nada" in which he stated that

> The rich specificity of the prose in Dubus's previous novel is seldom on display. In fact, the writing here frequently degenerates into cliché…Bassam the terrorist, is the least successful of these characters… Bassam seems to be the stereotypical resentful, sexually frustrated fanatic with a giant inferiority complex… Dubus's attempts to render Bassam's stream of consciousness in a kind of Arabic-inflected English frequently result in unintentional comedy. (McInerney, 2008)

More moments of "unintentional comedy" can be found in the novel in the over recurrence of the image of "laughing Americans" which Bassam insists on every time he describes people from the United States. The "merrily" motive is so habitual that it totally breaks any possible modicum of suspension of disbelief in Bassam's narrative. "Women sitting at outdoor tables, laughing" (Dubus, 2008, p. 23), "you heard their talk and their laughter" (p. 24), "young women talking and laughing" (p. 25), "these dirty kufar who would laughingly pull him between their legs straight to the eternal fire" (p. 25), "these kufar… they smoke and laugh" (p. 251), and a long *etcetera*. At one point Bassam compares all these American openly "laughing" women with his "two sisters whose eyes smiled at him from behind their abayas" (p. 58), which brings us back again to Bassam's preference for the "covered" to the "uncovered," inclination shared by April and the club's clients according to her. To Bassam, even American soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan laugh, "their uniforms pressed, their shoes dusty from the street. They talked too loudly and laughed too loudly" (p. 91). It is while depicting these "laughing" soldiers when Bassam suffers an unbelievable attack of American patriotism as he remarks how "there was something about these men you wanted to become. Tall and strong and afraid of nothing. Warriors" (p. 91), a description which coming from the terrorist does not but immerse the narrative into

mainstream stereotypes. Bassam's ideological discourse here falls into what Rosenberg in "Rescuing Women and Children" denounces as "a tradition of male-coded nationalism and claims of Western superiority" which were held by the US media in their focus on the need of rescuing women and children from oppression while covering the so-called "War on Terror" (Rosenberg, 2003, p. 81).

Another stereotyped – and stereotyping – moment in the novel is when, close to the end, Bassam realizes that Americans are able to love. The epiphany comes to his mind while he is watching a girl – it could have not been in any other way: "She is beautiful, yes, but this is not why Bassam cannot stop watching her. It is her love for the boy. It is her love for her youth and her health and her freedom and her life in this world…this is how Shaytan works among the kufar. He seduces you to love this life" (Dubus, 2008, p. 420). The message is clear: the American life-style and values work, and Americans do love in spite of being at the top of the capitalist system so much criticized by the figure Bassam throughout the novel. The most melodramatic moment in *The Garden of Last Days* precisely reinforces this message and takes place when April, after having won $ 1,200 for dancing before Bassam, loses her money and doesn't care about it just after being informed that her three-year-old daughter has disappeared.

Besides the basic lasciviousness which characterizes the figure of Bassam, the author attempts in the novel, with no much success, to develop some sort of past for Bassam which could serve as plausible motivation for him to become a terrorist. In brief, Bassam's story posits that it was the death of Bassam's brother which created in him a trauma and made him get more involved into religion, eventually becoming a terrorist just to make his parents be proud of him. Bassam sometimes dreams with his family "celebrating him" for the attack (p. 476), and even he dedicates "the slaughter"

to his father (p. 489). However, Bassam's story discredits itself when Bassam reports how his father made him clear that he opposed Jihad or at least understood it in a different non-violent way: "Bassam, so you must listen to me carefully. Jihad is this: it is a struggle within yourself, that is all. It is the struggle to live as Allah wishes us to live. As good people (p. 256).

Apart from what the figure of Bassam as narrator tells about him as character, the multiple-narrator strategy of the novel allows the reader to have also access to how other characters perceive him, especially April, due to their private encounter in the Champagne Room at the club. There are two frequent portraits that April makes of Bassam throughout the novel, both of them ostensibly stereotyped. The first is that Bassam simply "hates" everybody, as when April remarks: "Whatever he felt about her was not personal, she could see that…he hated all of them, didn't he?" (p. 203); or when April wonders aloud "Why's he hate *us*?" (p. 201) [emphasis added by the author], exactly reproducing President George W. Bush's notorious Why-do-they-hate-us-? discourse firstly uttered at the Congress on September 20, 2001. The other picture of the terrorist made by the figure of April is the patronizing "poor, he's just a kid," as when the stripper Retro shows him her vagina and April remarks: "His eyes were softer and he looked years younger. Like a kid, really" (p. 154); or when Bassam asks her just to stand up for a hundred dollars, and April watches him from above and observes that "Again, he seemed like a boy, one who'd been curious about things and was now filled with sadness… She almost felt like reaching down to run her fingers back through his hair, comfort him the way she would her own child" (p. 172). Both April's simplistic portraits of Bassam, the "hater" and the "poor kid," are repeated by her almost at the end of the novel as a sort of final conclusions. In public, she refers to the former when she is interrogated by the FBI regarding her encounter with the

terrorist: "'He said none of what we did was allowed… he said it like he hated us. You know, you could tell he hated us.' 'Who? You dancers? Or Americans?' 'No, all of *us*'" (p. 524) [emphasis added by the author]; on the contrary, in private, Spring opts for the patronizing one, as when the FBI officer leaves her house and she is left alone talking with her neighbor: "'What *was* he like?' 'Like a boy. Just some drunk and lonely boy'" (p. 526) [emphasis added by the author]. Despite its enormous possibilities for tension and drama, the encounter between the stripper and the terrorist which is the key event in the novel results as empty as the conclusions reached after it. As McInerney remarks in his review of the work:

> April's encounter with Bassam has no great resonance in her life. When she hears the news a few days after her encounter with Bassam, April is as shocked and baffled by the events of 9/11 as any of us. She quits stripping, but her close encounter with one of the terrorists seems finally random and meaningless. (McInerney, 2008)

In an interview with the journalist Charles McGrath for the *New York Times*, Andre Dubus III narrated himself how he did research to write *The Garden of Last Days*. He toured with his brother and a friend from high school several bars and strip clubs on the west coast of Florida that had been visited by the 9/11 hijackers. He interviewed a stripper who was writing a book on sex workers, and he acknowledged: "That was also when I began to get the idea that there were really two kinds of strippers. There are the ones who treat it as job, like waitressing, and the ones who start making big cash and then are waltzing out or doing drugs and falling into a dark hole" (McGrath, 2008). Such limited conclusion on his part when identifying only two compartmental categories of human beings may be responsible for the simplistic representation of the strippers in the novel: we have either the beatific April, who works hard to pay the bills for her daughter's support, or the rest of the strippers described by April as "witches" (Dubus, 2008, p. 18).

Dubus also interviewed the manager of the Pink Pony club on which the fictional Puma club in the novel is inspired. The manager was a tanned guy described by Dubus as someone who "can bench-press 400 pounds, and he looks it". Perhaps Dubus was also inspired on him when he created the character of Lonnie, the floor host guy with a "knock out punch" (p. 16) who, so patriotically and not surprisingly at all, ends up enlisting himself into the Marines to do "something" after hearing the news of the 9/11 events (p. 535). If Dubus believes that there are just two categories of strippers, he enhanced his horizons up to three kinds when representing men in the novel: the American *macho* hero, personified by Lonnie; the common looser, represented by A.J., the club's client who is unfairly accused of hijacking April's daughter and eventually redeems himself in prison; and the lustful "others," enacted by Bassam, his terrorist colleagues, and April's ex-boss, all of them Arabs, Muslims and Middle Easterners.

The closest connection that Dubus established to the real 9/11 terrorists throughout his strippers clubs' tour in Florida is indeed related with the way Dubus financed such "research" tour. In his interview to the *New York Times*, Dubus acknowledged that he covered the costs of his, his brother's and his friend's expedition to these strip clubs with a Guggenheim grant he won in 2001: "'At first I thought, I have a Guggenheim for just this kind of thing – research'… And then I thought, 'This can't possibly be appropriate.' But he went anyway…" (McGrath, 2008). Perhaps Dubus thought that he would penetrate more deeply into the terrorists' minds if he and his fellows emulated how Bassam and his mates spent in the same strip clubs the money they were supposed to wire back to Dubai. After all, the character of Bassam created by Dubus suffers his same pangs of conscience when

visiting the clubs, although he ends up visiting them anyway, exactly the same as Dubus.

The novel exudes certain kind of old-fashioned "masculinity" in the way tough male guys and sexy female strippers are depicted. Something not very surprising when considering that Dubus wrote much of *The Garden of Last Days* while remodeling himself "the master bathroom of his new house" in which he told his wife: "Honey, I need to go to Florida and I need to see some strip clubs" (McGrath, 2008). The supposedly flattering comment that "he talks less than a writer than a guy at your neighbor bar," which was made about him in the already mentioned *New York Times* interview, is not after all on the wrong track, and it can be perceived at plain sight in this novel full of strippers and gangsters, yet not definitively the place to look for further insights on terrorist issues. As the journalist Janet Maslin stated when reviewing *The Garden of Last Days* in the *New York Times* that "the novel compiles what is already known about the Florida-based hijackers without envisioning much else" (Maslin, 2008). McInerney was actually very accurate when reviewing Dubus's work he declared that "Journalism needs only to tell what happened; fiction, which deals in hypotheticals, has a higher threshold of truth" (McInerney, 2008). Indeed, Dubus' novel does not account for each of them.

Chapter 10

Stan Lee's comic "The Sleeping Giant": President George W. Bush's Rhetoric of Caves and Evil in Fiction

Although we have already approached a 9/11 comic within this project in comparison with two other fictional works,[34] we are going to analyze in this chapter a 9/11 comic as an individual piece. Therefore, it seems very convenient to introduce how the production of 9/11 comic projects started and was organized as a response to the 9/11 attacks.

The comic books were among the first narratives which attempted to respond through fiction to the events of September 11, 2001. Jenkins, in his accurate analysis of how comics rewrote the events of 9/11 titled "Captain America Sheds His Mighty Tears: Comics and September 11" (2006), remarked how "Slower and more reflective than CNN (or for that matter the *Daily Planet*), quicker in they turn around that television drama or Hollywood movies, comic books offered a useful testing ground for strategies by which popular culture could respond to this tragedy" (Jenkins, 2006, p. 69). According to Jenkins, many publishing companies specialized in comics produced material on the terrorist attacks very soon – most of them usually donating the proceeds from the volumes to organizations for the benefit and relief of the victims and their families. Marvel Comics, specially affected as its stories had always been set in New York City, published several comic books dealing with 9/11: *A Moment of Silence*, in which real-life victims' and survivors' stories were recreated mostly with pictures without words; *Heroes*, "humbly" subtitled "The World's Greatest Superhero Creators Honor the World's Greatest Heroes"; and the famous

[34] Chapter Four is focused on the analysis of three fictional narratives that re-created the events aboard Flight 93: Paul Chadwick's comic "Sacrifice," Paul Greengrass's film *United 93*, and Peter Markle's FOX TV Film *Flight 93*.

black cover edition of the series *The Amazing Spider-Man*, in which Spiderman honored the rescuing workers' labor while helping them. DC Comics joined some smaller publishing presses such as Dark Horse, Image, Chaos!, Oni, and Top Shelf among others and produced two compilation volumes: *9/11: Artists Respond*, and the similarly "modest" *9/11: The World's Finest Comic Book Writers & Artists Tell Stories to Remember*. Alternative Comics also produced a compilation book including the works of many underground comic artists, titled *9/11: Emergency Relief*.

Jenkins points out that all these comic projects were organized almost immediately after the attacks, so the deadlines for the artist contributors were at most a few weeks and in some cases just days after 9/11. According to Jenkins, "for the most part, the artists were speaking from their hearts with few institutional barriers" (Jenkins, 2006, p. 75). Indeed, it is the myriad of sometimes opposed ideological approaches to the 9/11 event what principally characterizes this initial wave of 9/11 comic compilations configured by different authors. However, although there could be few institutional barriers on the part of the editors as Jenkins suggests, on many comic writers it can be perceived the imprint of other kind of "institutional barriers": those images, semantic fields and expressions referring to the terrorists directly imposed by President George W. Bush's post-9/11 public addresses to the nation, biased representations of the terrorists which were repetitively overspread by the news media.

As it will be evidenced here, the two most commonly used expressions to refer to the 9/11 terrorists within these comic projects are related to their supposedly *archaic* way of living – with *caves* as one of its signifiers – and their "attributed" innate *evil* condition. If we observe President George W. Bush's post-9/11 public discourses, it results that these two same characteristic images are precisely the most

present when he refers to the terrorists. Let us explore first how the former of these depictions, that of terrorists living in caves/holes like either prehistoric men or animals, crystallized little by little but from Bush's very first public interventions immediately after the attacks.

"[I] have ordered… full resources of the Federal Government… to hunt," Bush assured in his initial remarks from the Emma Booker Elementary School in Florida. He repeated this same image of hunting in his "make no mistake: The United States will hunt…" in his speech from Barksdale Air Force Base. Both discourses, the Emma Booker Elementary School one and this other from Barksdale Air Force were pronounced the very same morning of September 11, 2001 (Bush, 2001, p. 1098). The following day, in a public address following a meeting with the National Security Team, Bush started his first description of "a different enemy than we have ever faced. This enemy hides in shadows... An enemy who preys… then runs for cover…. An enemy that tries to hide, but it won't be able to hide forever" (Bush, 2001, p. 1100). Animalistic and hideous features are attributed in this way to the terrorists whose capture is presented more like the hunting of a wild animal rather than an investigation of criminal acts.

The image of terrorists hidings like animals also permeated Bush's address to the Joint Session of Congress on September 20, 2001, when he demanded the Taliban to deliver those terrorists that "hide in your [their] land," although he acknowledged that terrorists could be anywhere, as he remarked how after being trained "in places like Afghanistan" terrorists are "sent to *hide* in countries around the world" [emphasis added]. In this same speech, there was a moment when Bush addressed the world using a propagandistic technique known as false dilemma or black-and-white fallacy which consists on reducing a whole spectrum of possibilities to just two alternatives

presented as mutually exclusive when they are actually not, all in order to gain support for one of them: it was when Bush urged every nation to make the decision of "Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists." After this simplification of the world in two groups, Bush asserted that "the civilized world is rallying to the American side," leaving then clear that any rejection of the imminent US military action against Afghanistan would not only be dangerous but "uncivilized" on the part of every nation in the globe. "This is the world's fight. This is civilization's fight," President Bush concluded extending by means of warmongering remarks, as usual, this US affair to a global matter (Bush, 2001, p. 1140-44).

It was in his address to the nation regarding the initial operations in Afghanistan on October 7, 2001, when President George W. Bush directly added the image of *caves* to his previous depictions of the hiding terrorists: "the terrorist may burrow deeper into caves and other entrenched hiding places. Our military action is also designed to… drive them out" (Bush, 2001, p. 1201). President Bush repeated this same image in the prime time News Conference on the State of the War four days later: After remarking again how 9/11 "was an attack on the heart and soul of the *civilized* world" [emphasis added], Bush completed his animal picture of the terrorists by describing once again how the military campaign's main goal was "to drive the terrorists out of their hidden caves" (Bush, 2001, p. 1219). Not only does this kind of terminology of animal hunting dehumanize those people who should be prosecuted for their crime in a public trial according to the Constitution of the United States, but it also encourages belligerent and bigoted attitudes on the population preventing any understanding of the possible causes behind the September 11, 2001, attacks, a comprehension extremely important in order to impede similar attacks in the future.

Let us focus now on how the other ideograph, that which equates the 9/11 terrorists with "evil" beings, inhabited President George W. Bush's post 9/11 discourses. In the same morning of September 11, 2001, President Bush addressed the nation and declared that "thousands of lives were suddenly ended by *evil*, despicable acts of terror." "Today our Nation saw *evil*…" he followed. "The search is underway for those who are behind these *evil* acts." He concluded citing the Bible: "Tonight I ask for your prayers for all those who grieve… And I pray they will be comforted by a power greater than any of us, spoken through the ages by Psalm 23: 'Even though I walk through the valley in the shadow of death, I fear no *evil* if you are with me'" (Bush, 2001, p. 1099-1100) [emphasis added]. The following day, after a meeting with the National Security Team, Bush remarked: "America is united. The freedom-loving nations of the world stand by our side. This will be a monumental struggle of *good versus evil*, but good will prevail" (Bush, 2001, p. 1101) [emphasis added]. President Bush not only conceives the world in the black or white categories of good and evil and places himself in the "right" side, but he also urges the world to take sides too, as when he addressed the Joint Session of Congress on September 20, 2001, remarking: "Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists" (Bush, 2001, p. 1142).

President Bush's dangerous dichotomical thinking is not at all new, especially among the US presidential lineage. As Virilio remarked in his analysis of 9/11 titled *Ground Zero* (2002), "when George W. Bush declared that his country was the champion of good… he was speaking the same language as his father in 1991, copied itself from the language of the 'just war' fought by the United Sates against Nazism half a century before!" (Virilio, 2002, p. 36) [emphasis added by the author]. This demonizing-the-enemy attitude exposes its propagandistic purpose and inner

absurdity when this same enemy was praised some years before. That is precisely the case, as the same US government that now appoints Osama Bin Laden as the incarnation of evil, sponsored centers in Brooklyn in the eighties to recruit Muslim fundamentalists to fight the Soviet Union in Afghanistan and called Bin Laden and his fellows "freedom fighters" (Martin and Shohat, 2002, p. 2). As Hunt pointed out in "In the Wake of September 11: the Clash of What?" (2003) US active political, military and economic "neocolonial" involvement in the Middle East for the last three decades is obviated in these public discourses and substituted by "grand narratives of American confrontation with heterodox ideologies" while "the past simply disappears in timeless contests between good and evil…self-congratulatory binaries…" which prevent any serious reflection on the matter (Hunt, 2003, p. 13).

In the same way as terrorism depends on the mainstream media to be "effective," such media also helps to install in the general opinion ideographs like this of "evilness" so easily attributed by George W. Bush to the 9/11 terrorists and by extension to whoever opposed his retaliating military vision. Both political and linguistic experts Chomsky and Baudrillard agree – one of the few things in which they do – in how the official media personalized the enemy in the figure of Osama bin Laden and demonized him as "the symbol of ultimate evil" or as the "embodiment of radical Evil," respectively (Chomsky, 2002, p. 37; Baudrillard, 2002, p. 27). President Bush's rhetoric of caves and evil not only was cast but also appropriated and perpetuated by the news media, and after the enormous number of spectators who get fixed to the TV set in such moments of "national tragedy," the entertainment media did not take a long time in producing fictions including these same demonizing patterns. As Markovitz underlined in his article "Reel Terror Post 9/11" (2004), the "stark rhetoric of the Bush administration's quest to eradicate 'evil' finds a perfect

correlate in films that cast A-list Hollywood stars in battles against the calculating and murderous violence of always highly racialized terrorist 'others'" (Markovitz, 2004, p. 202). However, as comics were among the first medium in producing fictional works in response to 9/11, they were practically unedited ideologically speaking before being printed as we said before. It is within these comic projects where this vilifying fashion premiered by Bush and merchandized by the media is most obviously observable.

One of the comics more in consonance with President Bush's post-9/11 rhetoric was Stan Lee's "The Sleeping Giant," which appeared in the DC Comics' compilation *9/11: The World's Finest Comic Boom Writers & Artists Tell Stories to Remember* (Khan, 2002, p. 177-80). It is a fable that tells the story of a planet inhabited only by anthropomorphic animals ruled by a blue-eyed "gigantic, mighty elephant," "a gentle and caring monarch" who "spent much of his time in happy slumber" due to the reigning peace of his kingdom (see fig. 10.1 and 10.2).

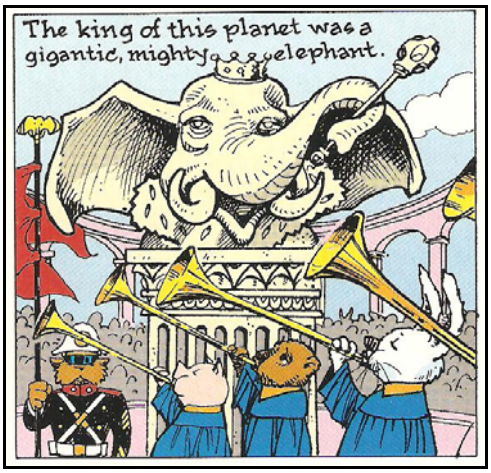


Figure 10.1.

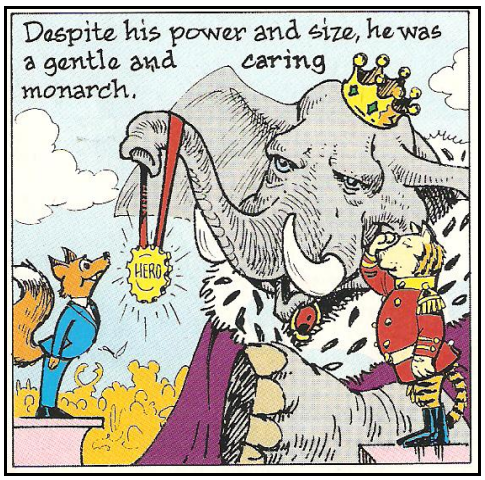


Figure 10.2.

"All the animals within his golden realm lived and prospered in peace and tranquility. They were free to do whatever they wished, as long as they harmed no one else," the text reads. "Scattered far and wide within that blessed realm lived many

mice," and here some mice are depicted in custom representing different professions: an executive running late, a cook, a baseball batter with the New York Yankees uniform and a couple of old farmers (see fig. 10.3).

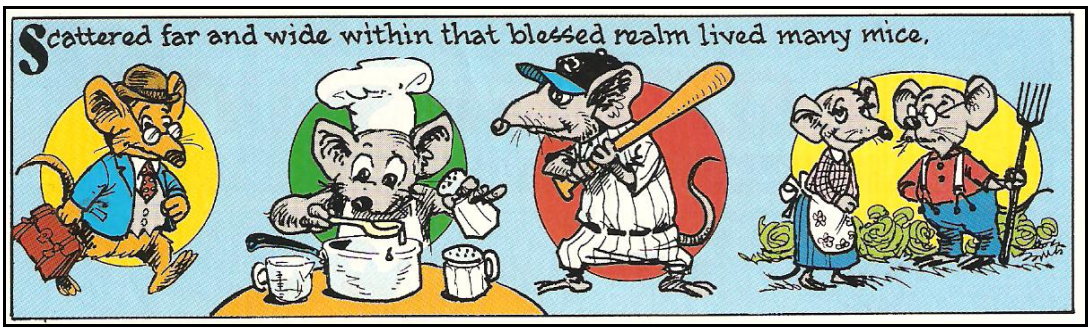


Figure 10.3.

Figure 10.4.

"The elephant king and all his subjects were content to coexist with the mice," reads the panel in which a female cat hands her shoes to an overworked tired-eyed cobbler mouse that holds some nails with its mouth while repairing a shoe (see fig. 10.4)

This far, the comic portrays an idealized peaceful animal world which can be understood in various ways: it can be a metaphorical representation of either the whole world or the US nation in which its multiculturalism would have been emphasized. In the former case, that is, if the animal world is intended to allude to the entire world, the author clearly would conceive the world as a hierarchized place governed by the US which would be represented as a patronizing "gentle and caring" elephant king "despite his power and size." Within this interpretation, it is clear that

the elephant would be the US because later in this 9/11 comic story some mice "set fire to the elephant's great cathedral." The other mentioned interpretation, that of a multicultural US in which different races, cultures, and religions are represented by many different animals coexisting "free to do whatever they wished as long as they harmed no one else," the hierarchy that distinguishes the elephant from the rest persists, which implies then that a certain race, culture, or religion, that of the elephants, governs the rest of loyal subjects. The author's choice of the animal that symbolizes the Republican Party as the absolute monarch of this world is also very significant. The intention of this part of the story is indeed to present an utopian pre-9/11 world or an idealized pre-9/11US without any problems at all, as it is emphasized when the narrator describes this animal world by generalizing on how "*All* the animals within this golden realm lived and prospered in peace and tranquility" [emphasis added].

It is not unequivocal whether the mice depicted in this part of the comic allude specifically to either Arabs, or Muslims, or Middle Easterners. The fact is that their difference from the rest of the animals is made evident through these two panels (see fig. 10.3 and 10.4). Both vignettes apparently intend to remark that not all mice are linked to the terrorist acts that will occur later in the story. However, what these two panels actually do is perpetuate in fiction some social patterns in relation with how immigrants should behave in the US to be "tolerated." By depicting a mouse dressed in the Yankees uniform, or by presenting a female cat handing her shoes to an exhausted cobbler mouse while the text remarks how "the elephant king and all his subjects were content to coexist with the mice," – Does this "content" means gladness or resignation? What about the mice's content to coexist? – it is actually sustained the archetype of how hard mice have to work and how integrated they must be into the

American way all in order to achieve certain "content" from the rest of the animals which allow the mice's "working" presence.

The story goes on: "But some mice there were who lived outside the golden realm, and who envied the king's power and the kingdom's wealth. They felt that only they should have such power and wealth." Here, the image that accompanies these words presents some ugly faced mice with pink eyes, poorly dressed, and with flies surrounding their heads on a dark grey esplanade from where they are looking at a far away golden and shining castle. Two of the mice are raising their arms in discontent, while another one points to the castle and wears a long-sleeve Islamic garment with the number "666" written on it (see fig. 10.5).

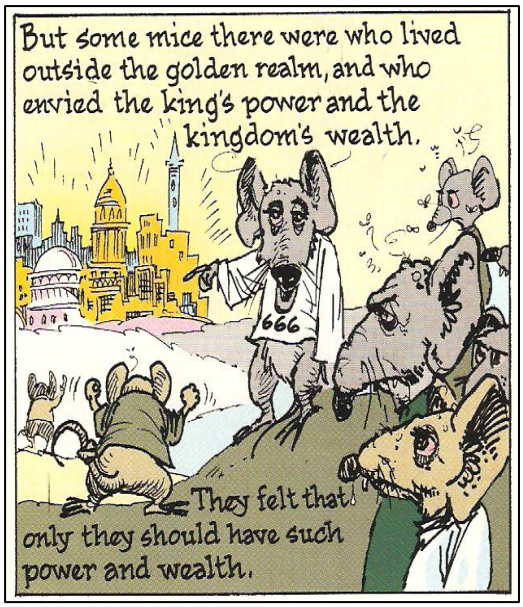


Figure 10.5.

The interpretation of the former panels as representing a utopian and multicultural all prosperity-freedom-power-and-wealth United States "golden realm" gains force here through the depiction of these other mice that contemplate the shining "realm" from an "outside" grey territory.

All the inhabitants of this "outside" land, either terrorists or civilians, either Talibans or Afghans, look alike: pink-eyed ugly mice whose "envy" for the "power and wealth" of the kingdom is presented as their principal motivation for their future terrorist behavior. It is also observable how the cipher 666, the Number of the Beast according to the biblical Book of Revelation, and which has become one of the most

widely recognized symbols for the Antichrist, or alternately, the Devil, is attributed by the author to one of this foreigners.

The next panel is quite explicit: on the left side, it is the demonized mouse with the 666 garment, one fist raised in anger, the other hand showing the others a poster in which a smiling pink-eyed mouse has three cartridges of dynamite inserted into his body, two into his ears and one inside of his ass, while holding a bomb with his hands. The center of the panel is occupied by the audience of such terrorist "lecture," a group of dirty-dressed pink-eyed ugly mice with closed fists as before but this time some of them are dribbling because of the excitement of the "lesson." The "outside-the-golden-realm" landscape is as grey and desolate as before, now full of mice skulls and flies flying all around. On the right, it can be observed three supposedly female mice wearing buckets over their heads with two little holes in them for their eyes while they hold little mice. At the back, an angry red-eyed mouse beats one of these "burqet" female mice with a stick. The texts reads: "So they planned and schemed in secret to destroy the elephant and his kingdom. They felt if they could topple the golden realm, then they themselves could rule the planet and make everyone live as they live" (see fig. 10.6).

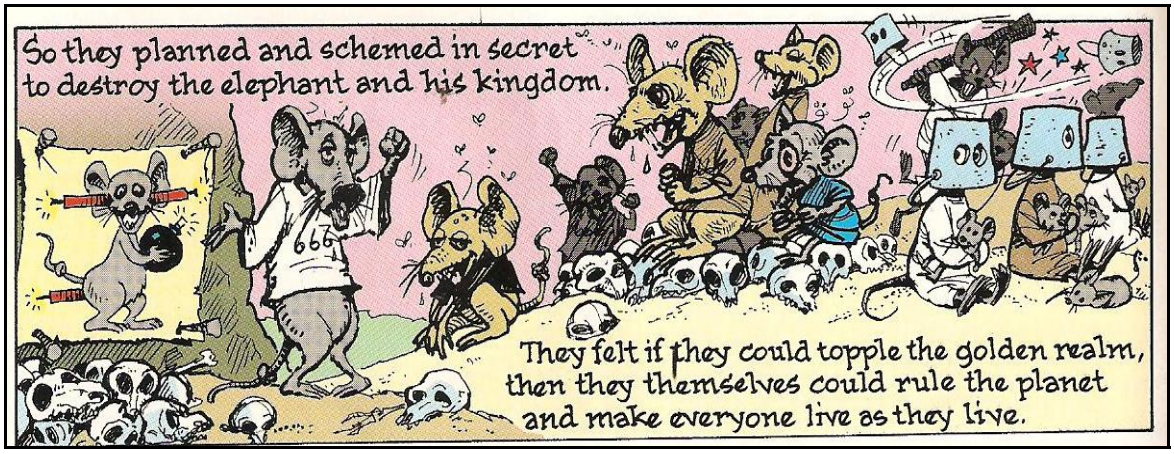


Figure 10.6.

The motivation for the attacks that is assigned in this panel to the terrorists is a supposed ambition for ideological domination expressed by that "make everyone live as they live." And the way in which they live is depicted as a hell on earth, Devil included. Once again, the false dichotomy technique is the strategy that principally operates throughout this entire panel: two only worlds are possible, either US or them, that is, either living in the golden realm, or among dynamite, skulls, dirt, and flies; we live in freedom, while they are women beaters who want to impose their habits, skulls, and flies on us; in summary, we are free and "alive," while they are surrounded by "death."

In the following two panels we can see mice running "fleeing and *hiding* after each attack," escaping punishment "because their mouse *holes* were scattered throughout the planet" (p. 178) [emphasis added] (see fig. 10.7 and 10.8).

Figure 10.7.

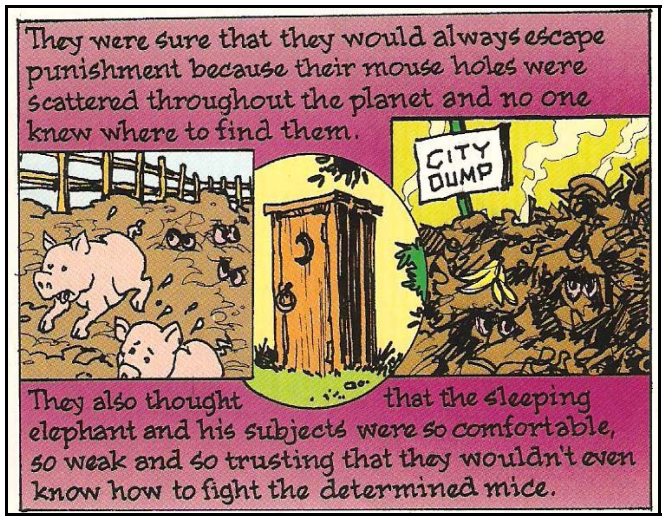


Figure 10.8.

All those who live outside the golden kingdom are depicted as animals that "hide" in "holes." Angry pink-eyes can be seen slightly showing among a mountain of garbage in the city dump and other dirty hiding places. The dangerous generalization – from Al-Qaeda terrorists to any Muslim – I attempt to warn against throughout this

entire projects gets perfectly exemplified by the drawing in this panel of some public baths with the Islamic crescent moon symbol on its door representing one of the dirty places where the terrorists hide (see fig. 10.8).

The comic goes on portraying how

> One day the mice set fire to the elephant's great cathedral, trapping many of his subjects inside… But the mice made one fatal mistake. They had never seen, had never known or even imagined the fury and the power of an awakened rampaging vengeance seeking elephant. Within a short time, all the monarch's loyal subjects, including the many, many *good* mice within the realm, joined forces to stamp out the *evil* mice. Once the *hiding* places had been discovered, the raging elephant thundered to the scene, stomping mightily on each *hole* with all his unimaginable strength and power, trapping and crushing the *deadly* mice within. (p. 180) [emphasis added]

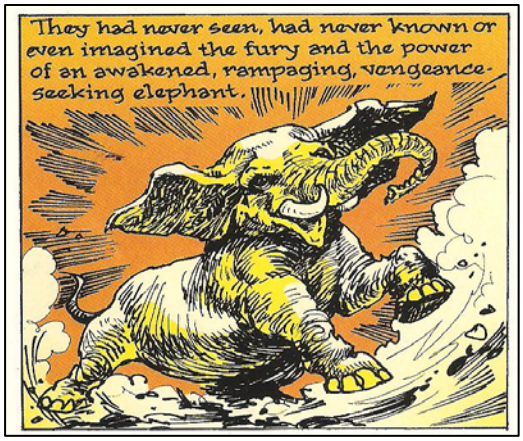


Figure 10.9.

The picture that accompanies these lines shows an enormous and furious elephant running through the desert while destroying everything under his footsteps (see fig. 10.9 and 10.10).

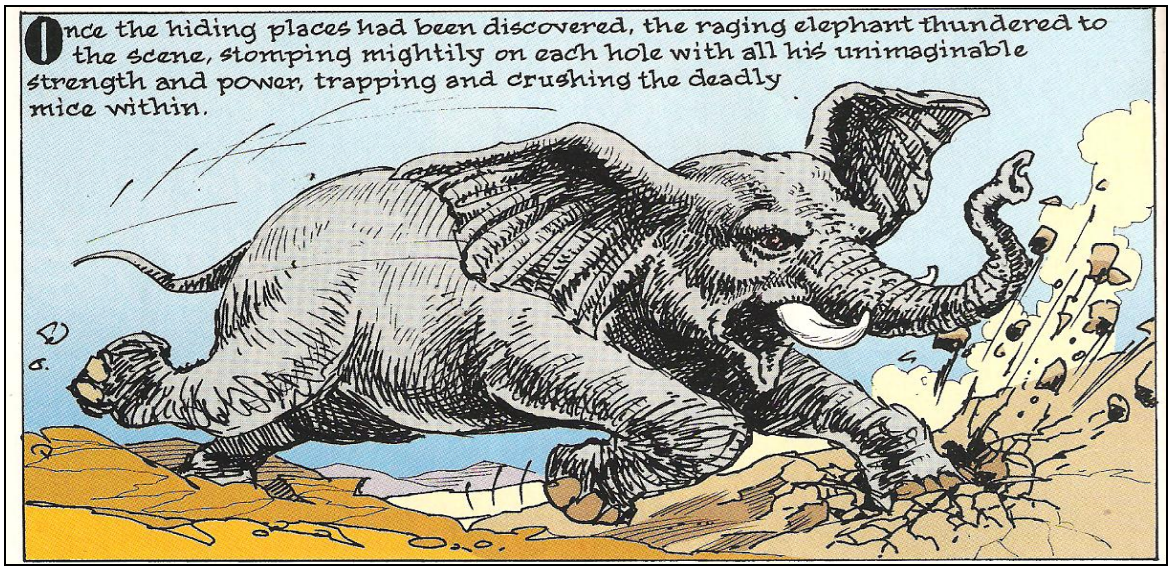


Figure 10.10.

Finally, the comic's "happy" ending shows a puppy wearing a NY Yankees cap doing his homework under the tender watch of their dog-parents (see fig. 10.11). The last panel shows a calm elephant resting with one pink eye open while the text reads: "Finally, the *evil* mice had been *eliminated*, and peace returned to the golden realm. As for the elephant, he vowed from the moment on he would always sleep with one eye open. MORAL: Never awaken a sleeping giant! (p. 180) [emphasis added] (see fig. 10.12)

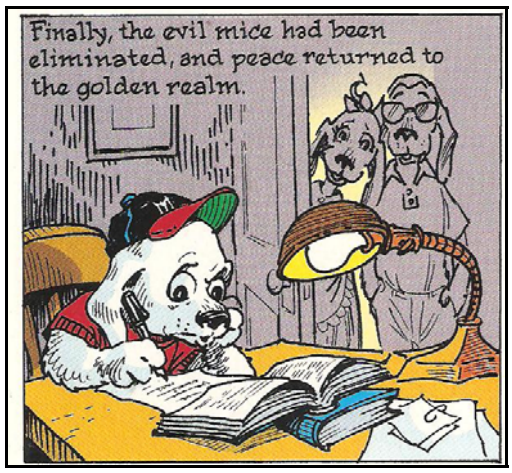


Figure 10.11.

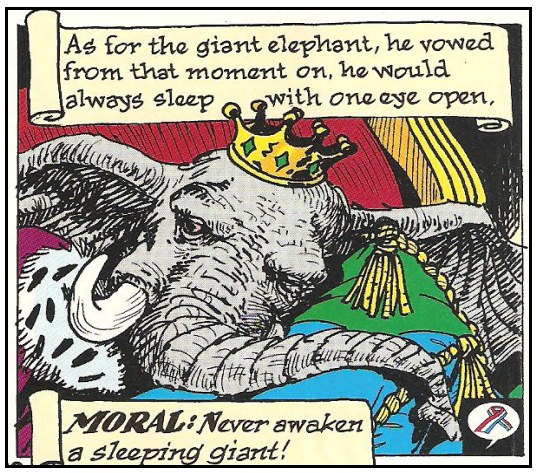


Figure 10.12.

The action in these last four panels is clearly divided into two sections: revengeful destruction and subsequent quietness. The former encourages military retaliation as the best response to the 9/11 attacks, while in the latter, the picture of the puppy doing his homework serves to represent the idea of familiar peace as something that can achieved once "the evil mice" are eliminated. It also suggests in a metafictional way how the entire comic story could be used to explain the 9/11 attacks to American children – do not forget the Yankees cap – as an animal fable. However, the moral "Never awaken a sleeping giant!" is not addressed to these children at all, yet it is a clear and straightforward menace towards any outsider "animal" who dares to confront the "golden realm" dynamics.

In conclusion, three elements of this pro-Republican, racially prejudiced, and warmongering comic deserve our attention: firstly, how it encourages US military action against Afghanistan, actually its total destruction "crushing the deadly mice within;" secondly, the constant reference to "them" as "evil"; and thirdly, how this comic, in spite of remarking how "the many, many good mice within the realm joined forces to stamp out the evil mice," insists on the "caves and holes" rhetoric to describe those other "evil" outsider mice. In fact, President George W. Bush's post-9/11 public discourses also followed this same pattern when at the Islamic Center in Washington he remarked on September 17, 2001, how "Muslims Americans make an incredibly valuable contribution to our country. Muslims are doctors, lawyers, law professors…they need to be treated with respect" (Bush, 2001, p. 1121), while some few days later he described 9/11 as an attack against "the civilized world" whose perpetrators "burrow deeper into hidden caves" from where "they", he insisted, will be "driven out" (Bush, 2001, p. 1201, 1219). According to President Bush and Lee's comic *The Sleeping Giant*, there seems to be two only possible ways for Muslims: either being perfectly assimilated and "good" citizens of the "golden realm," that is, doctors and lawyers in Bush's speech, and farmers, cobblers, and baseball players in *The Sleeping Giant*, or remain outside, "uncivilized," and evil, until they were all eventually eradicated by the elephant's "good" military forces.

PART IV

TERRORISTS IN "HYSTOERICAL" CONTEXT

There were authors (bin Laden, Atta, etc); there was plot – a structure of events with deep narrative inevitability; there were thousands of characters – but with no choice in turning down the role, with no knowledge that they've been cast to die. And there was an audience with no choice but to experience terrorist narrative once that narrative found its true medium of communication, the media without which terrorist art is ineffective and which complicitously completes its totalitarian trajectory: to saturate consciousness in the United Sates with the thought of terror, with no sanctuary left for the blessed banalities of ordinary life. They would make Americans forever insecure; cause us to join the rest of the world, at last; and end, at last, our long holiday from history.

– Frank Lentricchia and Jody McAuliffe,
Crimes of Art + Fiction (2003)

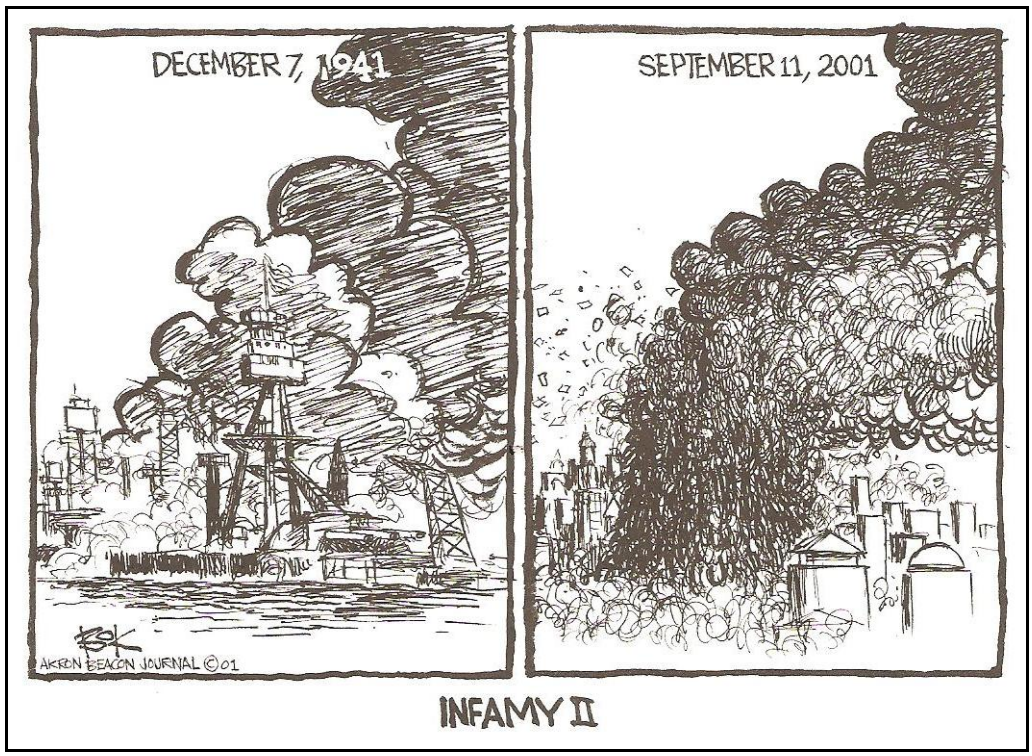


Figure v. Chip Bok, *Akron Beacon Journal*, 2001.

Part IV

Terrorists in "Hystoerical" Context

When the events of September 11, 2001, were narrated and analyzed, many fictional and non-fictional works committed terrible errors when reflecting upon them and especially when contextualizing them into history. This final Part IV of the project analyzes four fictional works which attempted in different ways to trace back the origins – and ultimate causes – of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. However, in spite of their differences, the common ground that is shared by these four narratives is the manipulation of historical discourses according to previous political, religious, and racial prejudiced interests. As if we were inhabitants of the nightmarish universe described by Orwell in *1984*, it will be proved here to what extent each historical version of the origins of the 9/11 attacks is displayed not only to suit bigoted positions but actually as a weighty argument to justify the subsequent humiliation and persecution of a race, a creed, and a people.

The first 9/11 work that will be addressed in this section is Sid Jacobson and Ernie Colón's *The 9/11 Report: A Graphic Adaptation* (2006). As its title underlines, it is supposedly the graphic version of the official *9/11 Report* published by the bipartisan 9/11 National Commission on Terrorists Attacks upon the US. Although Jacobson and Colon's comic follows the same division in chapters as its preceding narrative, and even it also includes a foreword by the Chair and Vice Chair of the 9/11 Commission itself, the comic's "graphical" portrait of Muslims and Middle Easterners could not be more misleading. Arab people are represented in the comic as wild and uncivilized beings in clear contrast with the rational white Americans also depicted in it. Such portrait of furious Muslims has many similarities with the vision promoted by the renowned British expert in the Middle East Bernard Lewis, who in his article "The

Roots Muslims Rage" (1990) developed alike historical assignation of a sentiment, the wild behaviour, to a specific religion and race. Both Jacobson and Colon's fictional comic and Lewis' non-fictional perspective will be studied together in Chapter Eleven.

Chapter Twelve analyzes David Swanner's 9/11 novel *The Faithful Cause* (2005). David Swanner is a Christian Fundamentalist who in his fictional work blames the entire Islam for 9/11 while also predicting the end of the civilized world as a consequence of a confrontation among religions and cultures. Although Swanner's novel was not very commercial, his catastrophist vision does not differ too much from the much more notoriously popular and non-fictional one encouraged by the political analyst Samuel P. Huntington. Huntington's theory of "The Clash of Civilizations" was originally formulated in 1992 and predicted that people's cultural and religious identities would be the primary source of conflict in the post-Cold War world. Both Huntington and Swanner develop in their works a "particular" analysis of the history of mankind which makes them reach the biased conclusion that the white West must be alert against the rest of "color" cultures. The analysis of both non-fictional and fictional dystopian landscapes will be carried out in contrast with those other not warmongering discourses that especially Huntington's vision provoked as response.

The last two 9/11 pieces that will be approached in this section are the comics "Soldiers" (2002) by Beau Smith, and "There Were Tears in Her Eyes" (2002) by Sam Glanzman. As part of the compiling and ideologically-mixed 9/11 comic projects, both works differ from the rest of the comics in their specific focus on history while comparing the September 11, 2001, attacks with former events. Chapter Thirteen addresses Smith's comic and its comparison of the 9/11 terrorists with the Nazis to the detriment of the former. Indeed, "Soldiers" also reproduces the

animalistic “hunting” imagery of President Bush’s post-9/11 public discourses which, populated by terrorists “hiding” and “scurrying off” into dark “holes,” was already approached in Chapter Ten when analyzing Stan Lee’s comic “The Sleeping Elephant.” The last comic that will be analyzed here, “There Were tears in Her Eyes,” also abuses former historical discourses to re-interpret the 9/11 events attending to current warmongering and patriotic interests. Chapter Fourteen focuses on how this last comic both victimizes the 9/11 casualties by comparing them with the victims of the Holocaust, and at the same time demonizes the “racialized” terrorists by placing them on a par with historical figures like Romanian Prince Vlad “the Impaler” upon which Count Dracula was inspired and who is now depicted as if he were Arab-looking. Such grandiloquent historical decontextualizations of the 9/11 attacks do not but hinder intelligent and self-examining visions and justify the US Government in its exercise of aggressive international measures more based upon hysterical rather than historical appreciations. In this Part IV it will be proved to what extent 9/11 fiction was the public arena in which wrong historical justifications were both reproduced and advocated.

Chapter 11

Sid Jacobson and Ernie Colón's comic *The 9/11 Report: A Graphic Adaptation*: A Portrait of Muslim Rage.

One of the most surprising best sellers of 2004 was *The 9/11 Commission Report*, formally named *Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States* (2004). The fact that an official governmental document prepared at the request of the President and Congress rose to the top the best-sellers lists and was finalist in the 2004 National Book Award's non-fiction category reveals to what extent the general public was still interested in the unresolved intricacies of 9/11. *The 9/11 Report* was the textual result of more than a year and a half of hard research on the events that lead up to the 9/11 attacks, and was carried out by the bipartisan commission appointed to do such a task: the 9/11 Commission, also known as "the Kean/Hamilton Commission" as Thomas H. Kean and Lee H. Hamilton were respectively the Chair and Vice Chair of the commission in question. Although *The 9/11 Report* was not exempt of criticism, especially regarding its light accusatory treatment of the US Government and the warnings on terrorist attacks that it had received prior to the 9/11 attacks, its narrative qualities were in general highly praised. The Chief Judge of the Seven Circuit, Richard Posner, described it for the *New York Times* as "superbly executed, uncommonly lucid, even riveting… an improbable literary triumph" (Posner, 2004).

Two years later, two veterans of the comic industry, Jacobson and Colón, published the result of their two-year collaboration to produce the graphic adaptation of the "official" 9/11 best-seller. The publication of the comic was not either immune to controversy, as it proves the *Washington Post* editorial "Wrong Topic for a Comic Book" published on July 25, 2006, in which a pilot for American Airlines sentenced

the inappropriateness of the comic medium to represent the 9/11 attacks (Villani, 2006). Nevertheless, the comic project was highly regarded by most of the specialized critics as an innovation in its field for precisely using the comic medium for such a difficult subject (Hogan, 2006). It also reached the top of several best-sellers lists in 2006 as its non-graphic predecessor did in 2004.

The historical explanatory purpose of the comic was expressed by the authors in the acknowledgements section: “We hope this book can help… us to understand better what happened that day and in the years leading up to it” (Jacobson and Colón, 2006, p. v). The official and non-graphic *9/11 Report* was also directed towards the enterprise of tracing the origins of the attacks while contextualizing them historically. The comic keeps the same intention of its predecessor while making the 640-page of *The 9/11 Report* more accessible to a general audience. As both authors Jacobson and Colón acknowledged in an interview to Neal Conan, the host of the national radio program *Talk of the Nation*: “We have sort of come up with the idea that it’s graphic journalism… you’re actually quoting… making [the Report] available to a wider audience” (Garner, 2006).

The 9/11 Report: A Graphic Adaptation (2006) logically shares many elements with its non-graphic predecessor. The comic has the same distribution in chapters as *The 9/11 Report*, and even it includes a Foreword by precisely Kean and Hamilton, the Chair and Vice Chair of the commission that elaborated the original report. In this Foreword to the comic book, both commissionaires underline once again the comic’s purpose of making the official report accessible: “One of the most important and tragic events in our nation’s history needed to be accessible to all… we are pleased to have the opportunity to bring the work of the 9/11 Commission to the attention of a new set of readers” (Jacobson and Colón, 2006, p. ix). However, not all

the critics saw the comic book's language as accessible as intended. For example, the reputed comic author and critic Douglass Wolk wrote the article "Maus It's Not" for *Salon.com* in which he described the graphic adaptation as

> ... leaden as the original… Sid Jacobson and Ernie Colón's "graphic adaptation" of the 9/11 Report has the best of intentions. As their preface explains, the idea is "to tell the [National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States] truly calamitous story so that every person who reads this book will understand what happened and realize all the frightening implications." They note that the commission's original report is rather tough going, and that they hoped to make it easier to follow by turning it into comics. Sadly, they've failed on that account, producing a garbled mess of a book that leaps frantically and incoherently from factoid to factoid, peppered with made-up scenes that undermine the credibility of the entire affair. (Wolk, 2006)

Besides remarking the messy distribution of panels, Wolk also compared the comic book with former comic projects that also approached historical events:

> I don't mean to say that it's impossible to make great nonfiction comics about historical events. There are a lot of them: Chester Brown's "Louis Riel," Joe Sacco's "Palestine" and "Safe Area Gorazde," and Art Spiegelman's inevitable "Maus" all come to mind. What all of those books have in common, though, is that they foreground their artists' style – they're all very personal perspectives on the events they're depicting. The artwork in those books never claims to be anything other than an individual interpretation… So where are Jacobson and Colón in this story…? They never suggest that their book is anything other than a faithful adaptation of the commission's report and the historical record. (Wolk, 2006)

Therefore, it is Jacobson and Colón's fidelity to the "historical record" and to the original 9/11 Report what seems to disturb Wolk. On the question of the comic's loyalty to "veracity," Wolk is right when he suggests that today it's very hazardous – and also a bit egomaniacal – to describe one's artistic artefact as "the" true one, especially when historical narratives are involved. The result seems much more sincere and convincing when the approach just intends to present "a" particular perspective of the historical event not hiding the factual impossibility of omnipresence. On the second issue, the loyalty to the original 9/11 report – although both the report and its adaptation have a similar structure in chapters –, I disagree with

Wolk especially regarding the difference of both reports' faults. The principal criticism that *The 9/11 Report* received was directed, as I mentioned before, to the light treatment of the US Governments concerning the warnings on terrorism that it had received before 9/11. In fact, the report accuses the Clinton's and Bush's Administrations of just a "failure of imagination" to prevent the attacks.[35]

On the contrary, the main criticism that can be exposed of *The 9/11 Report: A Graphic Adaptation* is not a failure but an "excess of imagination" as we will see. Wolk himself articulates this phenomenon with other terms:

> A lot of the "Report," [the Graphic Adaptation] though, involves head shots and conversations in meeting rooms, and you can tell that Colón was itching to draw something more exciting. A description of the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan mentions that Ahmed Shah Massoud's soldiers "were charged with massacres" – an excuse for the artist to draw an image of them raiding a village, swinging swords, firing rifles into buildings, blood running in the streets, a peasant woman frantically dashing away with her baby in her arms, some fronds of a tree poking out from behind a building [see fig. 11.1]. That panel looks dynamic in a way that no other images in the pages around it do; it also represents a kind of fantasy that has no place in a book like this, because a medium as subjective as comics heads into very dangerous territory when it conflates documented fact with speculation for artistic effect. (Wolk, 2006)

[35] Since then, the expression "failure of imagination" entered into English colloquial language to describe circumstances wherein something that was possible to predict or foresee, was in fact, not predicted or foreseen.

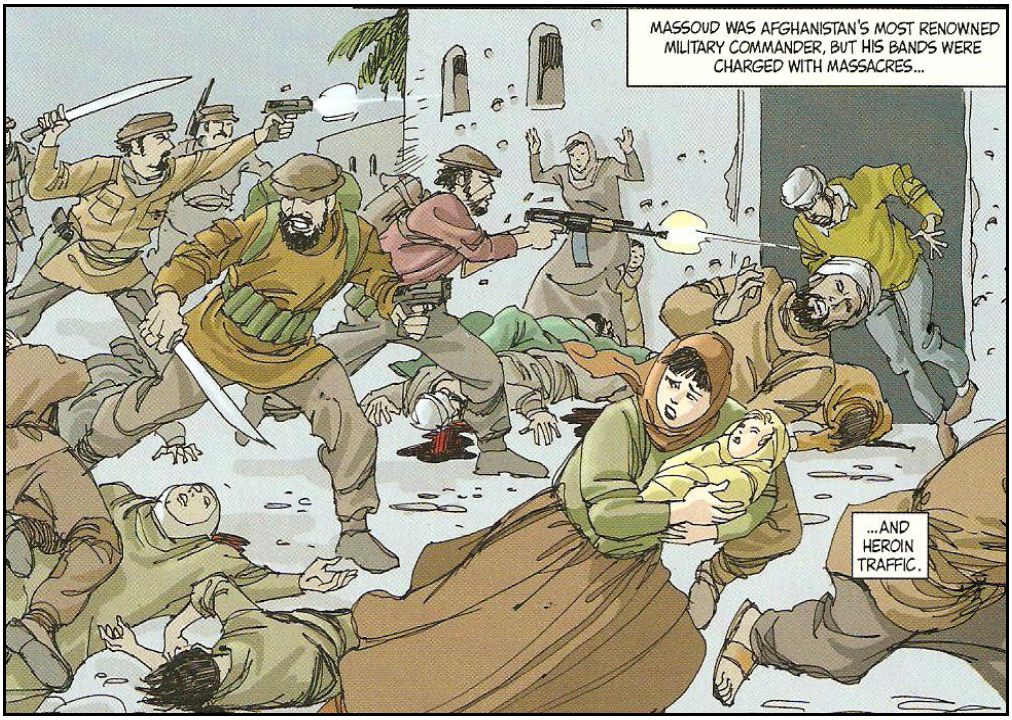


Figure 11.1.

Another example of this "excess of imagination" which also is discussed by Wolk in his article is the panel in which "a pair of FBI agents bring in three handcuffed, tattooed, smirking punks, declaring, "Their so-called clubroom was loaded with horse" – what, have we just stumbled into an episode of "CSI"?" (Wolk, 2006) (see fig. 11.2).

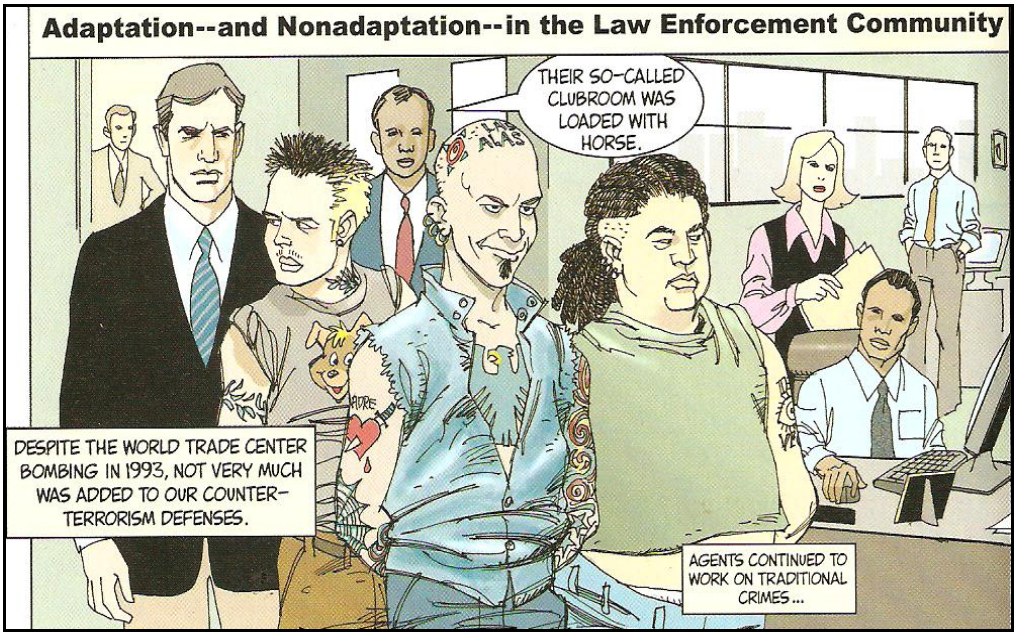


Figure 11.2.

There's no mention of such detention in the 9/11 Commission's report. Wolk justifies the appearance of this panel assuring that "A lot of scenes that were evidently grafted into the Jacobson/Colón "Report" to make it more interesting to look at set off the "bogus" alarm" (Wolk, 2006). However, Jacobson and Colón's excess of imagination entails more dangerous consequences. In this case, the "traditional" crimes on which the security agents "continued to work" according to the panel seem to confirm that the exercise of prejudiced, physical profiling on the basis of goatees, dreadlocks, and tattoos is effective. If being a punk is synonymous of being a heroine dealer according to the imaginative comic adaptation, the representation carried out of the 9/11 terrorists is not less generalizing and racially biased, as it will be proved in this chapter.

Before approaching in depth this last issue – which, according to this research, is of fundamental importance –, it also seems necessary to underline some other "formal" criticism that the comic adaptation in question was the object to. For example, Hilary Goldstein in *Comics IGN* remarked that dialogues of Jacobson and Colón's story were simplistic:

> The dialogue is often amateurish, a disappointment considering Jacobson's comics expertise. When President Bush learns of the first plane crashing into the World Trade Center, the graphic adaptation has him saying, "Oh no! Must have been pilot error." The excessive use of exclamation points and unnatural dialogue is the *9/11 Report's* greatest narrative failing. (Goldstein, 2006)

In the article "Graphic Adaptation: The 9/11 Report as Graphic Novel," which was presented at the meeting of the NCA 93rd Annual Convention in Chicago on November 17, 2007, the researcher Keith Comier argued that despite "its creative potential as a text, the graphic novel format is underused and overlooked" within *The 9/11 Report: A Graphic Adaptation* (Comier, 2007). Comier also addressed the important topic of how public memory can be created and recreated through

representative texts like this. Indeed, more dangerous than that misuse of the graphic format is this "rewriting of the event" through fiction, in this case, through pictures, that Comier remarks. Wolk too, in "Maus It's Not," also pointed out this abuse of pictures to mislead some aspects of the original text:

> Jacobson and Colón haven't managed to substantially clarify their source, and they haven't magically turned it into an easily comprehensive narrative by dumbing down the text and adding a bunch of pictures. If anything, they've muddied it with misleading visual interpretations… Colón does his best to make the clutter of dates and names and figures look dramatic: On one page, for instance, we see one hijacker flashing a box cutter at another, then two extreme close-ups of a sinister-looking eye. (Wolk, 2006)

In the sequence commented by Wolk here (see fig. 11.3), the repetition of the sinister-eye panel is oriented to illustrate the terrorist Mohammad Atta's "evilness" when the original text reports both his first, unfulfilled plan of crashing the planes into nuclear facilities, and his selection of planes departing on long flights because they would be full of fuel.

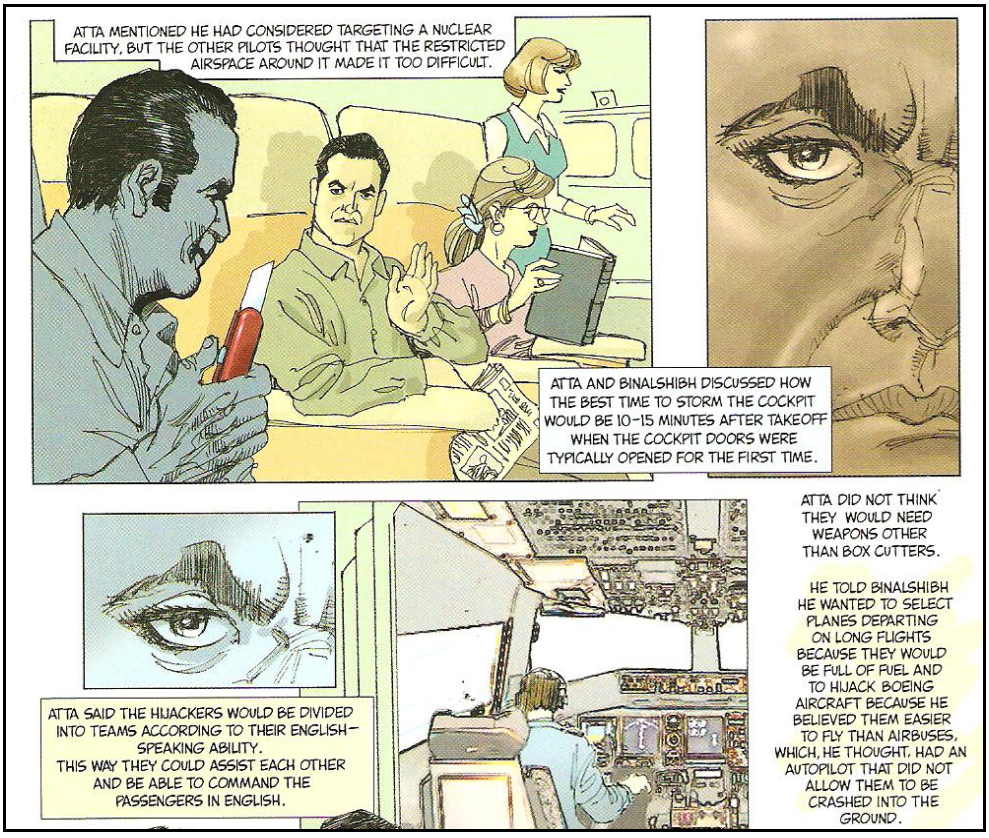


Figure 11.3.

However, it is not only Mohammad Atta's sinister-eye which is depicted in the comic. Osama Bin Laden, the other most demonized figure in the corpus of 9/11 fiction, is also reduced to this physical feature. The result seems to imply that almond-shaped eyes are exclusive of evil-doers (see fig. 11.4).

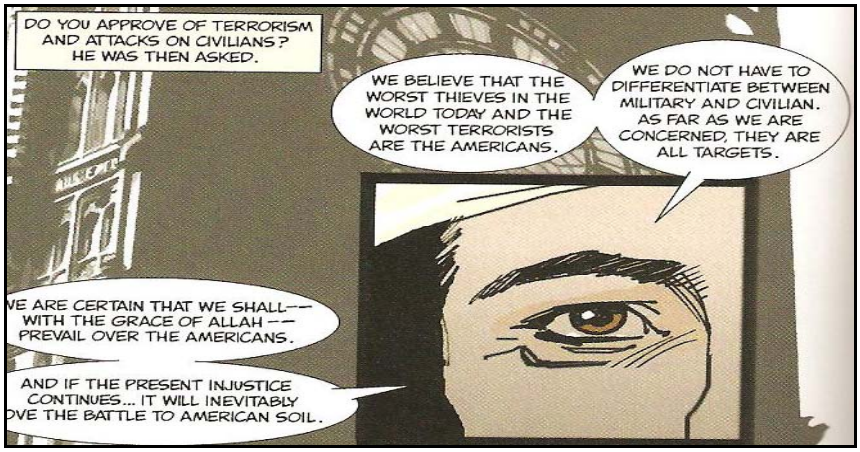


Figure 11.4.

In this case, Osama's eye accompanies the statements he pronounced during an interview to ABC News on May, 1998, in which he assured his intentions to move the battle "to American soil" making no difference between militaries and civilians. It can be observed through both Atta's and Bin Laden's depictions how the comic's authors opted to illustrate the terrorists' worst or most harmful plans by drawing their gaze in a mischievous fashion.

This graphic demonization of Atta and Bin Laden enormously contrasts with how American soldiers and CIA agents are represented in the comic. In his review of the comic for *Curledup.com*, Eaton commented on this issue of how those in charge of US security are often depicted in the comic with an "squared-jawed determined look":

> This goes beyond identifying Arab versus American characters but resonates in the dark, brooding, and sometimes sinister appearance of many of the terrorists, contrasted with deep penetrating, square-jawed determined look of those vested in US safety. Other subtle ties in the presentation of characters exist that can taint readers' opinion about the nature of the character, which to

> some degree turn this book more into a narrative than a report and by doing so, take a liberal interpretation of the term "adaptation." (Eaton, 2006)

This "determined" representation of US security forces pointed out by Eaton can be observed for instance in the following panel (see fig. 11.5), in which a CIA agent asks an Arab man about the identity of a suspect. The portrait of both the interrogator and the interrogated could not be more different and stereotyping.

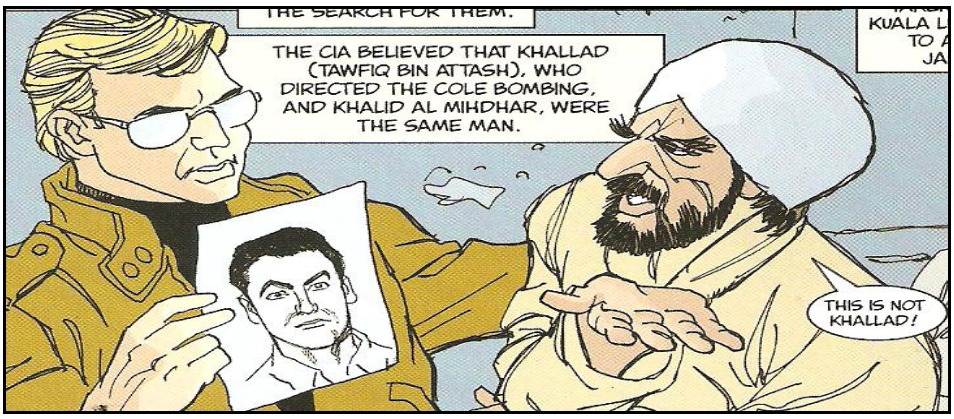
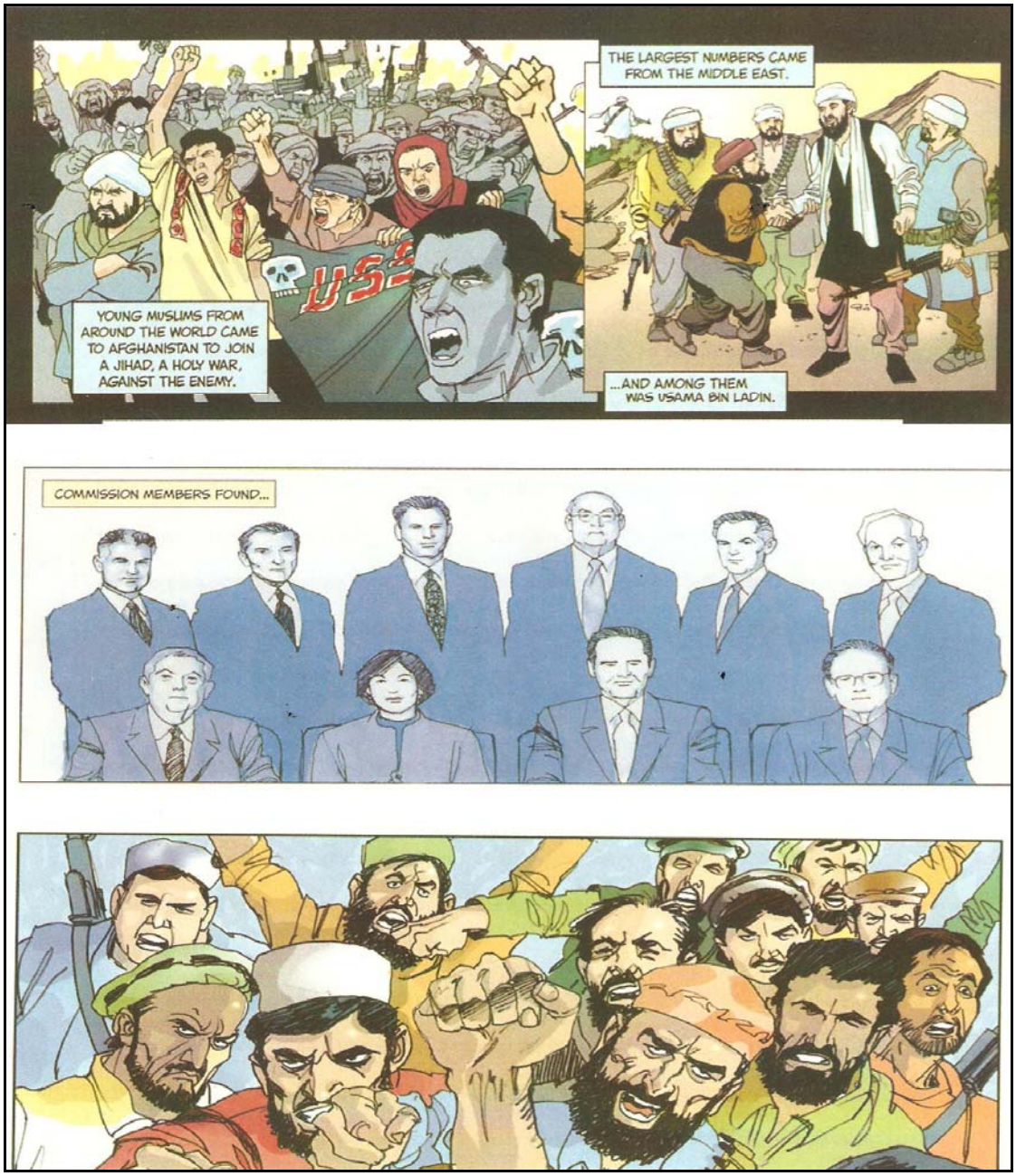


Figure 11.5

However, not only are the 9/11 terrorists demonized and the US forces heroized in Jacobson and Colón's graphic adaptation. Much more harmful is their representation of ordinary Americans and ordinary Muslims. The comic book perpetuates through images and without ceremony the generalizing discourse that equates Americans with "rational thinking" and Muslims and Arabs with "violence." It just takes a look at some of the panels to be aware of this biased representation carried out by the American comic authors (see figs. 11.6, 11.7, and 11.8).



Figures 11.6, 11.7, and 11.8.

It is remarkable how in the first of these three panels (fig. 11.6), besides the evidently violent graphic representation of Muslims, the biased image is accompanied in its purpose by a text which does not hesitate in putting the words “Middle East,” “Osama,” “Afghanistan,” and “Muslims” together into the same discourse as if they were indissolubly part of identical semantic field.

This prejudiced stereotype that links Muslims with “violence” of any kind is not at all new and has being traced back by scholars like Edward Said in both literary

and non-literary Western canonical texts. However, other reputed scholars like Bernard Lewis have not shown reluctance to do just the opposite, that is, to encourage a violent vision of Islam through their "academic" works and careers. In the case of Lewis, it was wide known among the academic circle his 1990 notorious article "The Roots of Muslim Rage" for *The Atlantic Monthly*, in which he explained the historical reasons for the factoid of Muslims being violent, a premise he assumes as self-evident without further discussion. In fact, his 1982 former book *Muslim Discovery of Europe* was already very polemical, as Lewis argued in it that the "backwardness" of Muslim lands was not a result of Western colonialism but due to the decline of the Ottoman Empire and in most of the cases, "self-inflicted." The most dangerous aspect of Lewis's prejudiced perspective is that it certainly has had an enormous influence on aggressive westernist policymakers during the last decades. US former Vice President Dick Cheney remarked about Lewis at the World Affairs Council of Philadelphia on May 1, 2006:

> I had the pleasure of first meeting Bernard more than 15 years ago, during my time as Secretary of Defense. It was not long after the dictator of Iraq had invaded Kuwait, and we brought in a large number of outside experts to speak about the history and the way forward in the Middle East… No one offered sounder analysis or better insight than Bernard Lewis. He was an absolute standout, and I decided that day that this was a man I wanted to keep in touch with, and whose work I should follow carefully in the years ahead. Since then we have met often, particularly during the last four-and-a-half years, and Bernard has always had some very good meetings with President Bush….in this new century, his wisdom is sought daily by policymakers, diplomats, fellow academics, and the news media. (Cheney, 2006)

Indeed, Lewis received the prestigious National Humanities Medal from President George W. Bush in November 2006.

On the relationship of Lewis's ideological positions with those by other academics, it must be conceded that his "The Roots of Muslim Rage" has the "merit" of having coined the term "clash of civilizations," whose eponymous theory was

developed by Samuel Huntington.[36] On the other side of the spectrum, Lewis's vision of Islam and the Middle East has been criticized by many other reputed scholars like Said or Chomsky. When Said defined "Orientalism" in his eponymous work in 1978 as "political intellectualism bent on self-affirmation rather than objective study, a form of racism, and a tool of imperialist domination," he was familiarized with Bernard Lewis's emerging career and he did not hesitate when singled Lewis out as "a prefect exemplification" of an "Establishment Orientalist" whose work "purports to be objective liberal scholarship but is in reality very close to being propaganda against his subject material" (Said, 1978, p. 315). Twenty years later, in a roundtable organized by *Al-Ahram Weekly*, Said insisted in the fact that Lewis' knowledge of the Middle East was so biased it could not be taken seriously, and claimed that "Bernard Lewis hasn't set foot in the Middle East, in the Arab world, for at least forty years. He knows something about Turkey, but he knows nothing about the Arab world" (Said, 1998). Finally, when after the 9/11attacks the interest in Lewis's works re-emerged among conservative political leaders, Said wrote the article "The Clash of Ignorance" (2001) for *The Nation* in which he alluded to Lewis's "execrable methods" such as his "lazy generalizations, the reckless distortions of history, and the wholesale demotion of civilizations into categories like irrational and enraged" (Said, 2001). According to Said, Lewis treats Islam as a monolithic entity without the nuance of its plurality, internal dynamics, and historical complexities, accusing him of "demagogy and downright ignorance" (Said, 2001).

Nevertheless, as I said before, it was not Said the only academic who disqualified Lewis's vision as opportunist, biased and propagandistic. Chomsky too, in a 2002 interview with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's "Hot Type"

[36] Both Huntington and his fatalistic and westernist beliefs will be approached in depth in Chapter Twelve when studying David Swanner's equally catastrophist and racist 9/11 "historical" novel *The Fateful Cause* (2005).

program, claimed that Bernard Lewis, in his writings on the Middle East, has systematically omitted evidence of Western culpability for failures in the region. On Lewis, Chomsky concluded: "We know that he's just a vulgar propagandist and not a scholar" (Chomsky, 2002). Bernard Lewis's lack of objectivity was even punished by a French Court when he was ordered to pay the symbolic amount of one franc as damages in a civil proceeding for his statements on the Armenian Genocide in a November 1993 *Le Monde* article. Lewis's position was that while mass murders did occur, he did not believe there was sufficient evidence to conclude they were government-sponsored, ordered, or controlled, and therefore they did not constitute a genocide. The court sentenced that "by concealing elements contrary to his opinion, he neglected his duties of objectivity and prudence" (Lewis, 1993).

It is this lack of objectivity displayed by Lewis exactly the same mistake into which Jacobson and Colón fall when depicting "enraged" Muslims. And it was Lewis himself who traced back the roots of this alleged "rage." According to Eaton, there is no doubt regarding the biased representation of Muslims and Arabs carried out within *The 9/11 Report: A Graphic Adaptation*:

> Some suspicion remains on the objectivity of Sid Jacobson and Ernie Colon. A report such as this should be delivered with as much objectivity as possible, not attempting to evoke emotion or bias beyond what the facts represent. This is where the "graphic adaptation" does just that; it visually presents certain biases. What is meant by this is that, on average, any reader could identify the villains versus the heroes based solely on facial sketches. (Eaton, 2006)

Moreover, besides the facial sketches, there is this element of violence already underlined which is always attached to Arab people in the comic, either portraying them "enraged" or smiling but carrying weapons (see fig. 11.9).

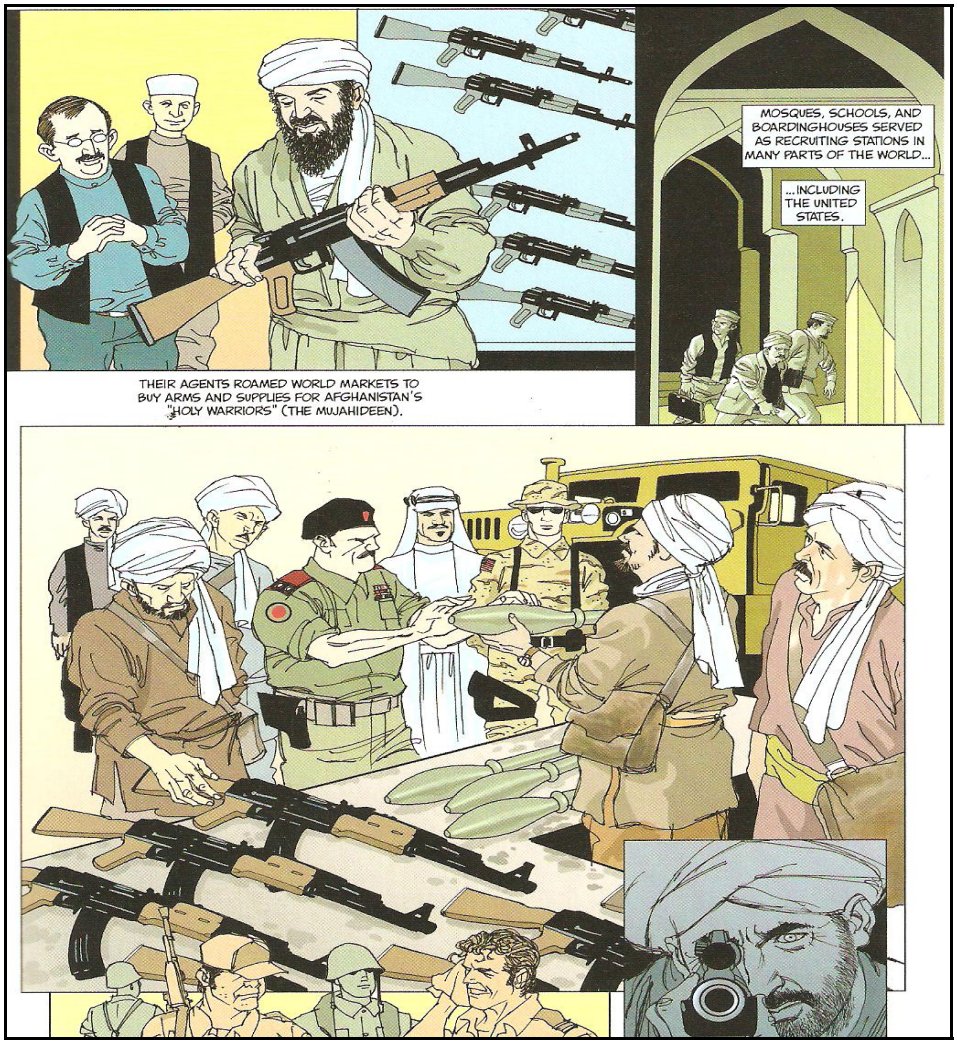


Figure 11.9

Jacobson and Colón's biased depiction of Muslims, Arabs and Middle Easterners was actually so criticized – as well as such an economic success – that they did not last in producing another "historical" comic in an attempt to exonerate their former prejudicing best-seller. In 2008, they published also in collaboration *After 9/11: America's War on Terror (2001-)*, a comic in which now it was traced back, not the origins of Al-Qaeda's terror, but the United States' opportunistic and equally terrorizing war against Afghanistan and any country that supposedly were harboring terrorists. Nevertheless, in spite of this redemptive comic, there remains Jacobson and Colón's legacy to the corpus of 9/11 fiction: not a graphic replica of the 9/11

Report's "failure of imagination," but a biased and over-imaginative representation of Muslim rage. It seems that Malcom X's words pronounced in 1963 about the mainstream representation of Islam are more current than ever: "Whites speak of Muslims almost synonymously with violence. Whatever Muslims are mentioned by them, violence is brought up" (Hasan, 2006).

Chapter 12

David Swanner's novel *The Fateful Cause*:

Islam and China Conspiring Against US

In 1993, the political analyst Samuel P. Huntington published the controversial article "The Clash of Civilizations?" in the academic journal *Foreign Affairs*. Although the expression "class of civilizations" had already appeared in Bernard Lewis's "The Roots of Muslim Rage" in the September 1990 issue of *The Atlantic Monthly*, it was within the 1993 *Foreign Affairs*'s referred article where Huntington originally formulated his polemic "theory of clash of civilizations" which later he expanded in his 1996 book *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order*.

Huntington's thesis of the "clash" starts by surveying diverse contemporary theories about the nature of global politics in the post-Cold War era. Huntington specifically alludes to Francis Fukuyama's thesis of the "end of history." In the article "The End of History?" published in the 1989 summer issue of the journal *The National Interest*, Fukuyama had argued that the world had reached the "end of history" in the Hegelian sense because, according to Fukuyama, liberal democracy and Western values had become the only remaining ideological option for nations in the post-Cold War world (Fukuyama, 1989). Huntington responded to Fukuyama stating that this "end of history" vision "catches aspects of the emerging reality," yet it misses "a central aspect of what global politics is likely to be in the coming years": that "the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic" but "cultural. Nation States will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principal conflicts of global politics will

occur between nations and groups of different civilizations. The clash of civilizations will dominate global politics” (Huntington, 1993, p. 22).

Huntington then justifies his hypothesis abusing historical arguments by carrying out an historical analysis of the global conflicts of the last three and half centuries. According to Huntington, from the emergence of the modern international political system with the Peace of Westfalia (1648) to the French Revolution (1789) the conflicts of the Western world were largely among “princes” – emperors, absolute monarchs… – principally in order to expand the territory they ruled. However, during this period, nation states emerged, and with the French Revolution a new era started in which “the wars of kings were over; the wars of peoples had begun” (Huntington, 1993, p. 23). To Huntington, this nineteenth century pattern of conflicts generated among “nation states” lasted until the end of the Word War I because the Russian Revolution set out a new type of conflicts, those disputed because of “ideologies”: first among communism, fascism-Nazism and liberal democracy during World War II, and later between communism and liberal democracy during the Cold War.

It can be observed in this historical typology of antagonisms described by Huntington that all these conflicts among princes, nation states, and ideologies were principally within Western civilization. Huntington suggests that since the end of the Cold War, a new era has started in which international politics has moved from its Western phase, and that the following twenty-first century will be characterized by the problematic interaction of the West and non-Western civilizations, and among non-Western civilizations: a total clash of civilizations (Huntington, 1993).

In his 1993 article, Huntington also carried out several predictions about international events, such as the political rise of fundamentalist groups in Islamic countries and the consolidation of Chinese and Hindu economic super giants. After

the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, Huntington's theory of the clash of civilizations gained widespread attention as if they were the definitive proof of the veracity and validity of Huntington's foreshadowing hypothesis. Since then, several twenty-first century events have usually been perceived by many academics, political theorists and news media as clear manifestations of that clash of civilizations that Huntington referred to: the ongoing War in Afghanistan since 2001, the invasion of Iraq in 2003, the 2005 Danish cartoon crisis, the 2006 victory of the organization Hamas in the general elections that took place in the Palestinian National Authority, and the current Iranian nuclear crisis.

One of the most controversial aspects of Huntington's vision of contemporary global politics is, together with his catastrophist predictions, the unquestionable West-centrism that his theory exudes. Huntington's thesis seems addressed to alert the Western nations to be cautious against the rest of the world that is presented as "anxious" to confront Western values, alleged intrinsically "modern" and "advanced," and Westerners' "privileged" way of life. Indeed, Huntington's fatalistic theory is not exempt of certain racially-based warmongering which can be traced throughout Huntington's entire "academic" and political career. As an advisor to former US President Lyndon B. Johnson, Huntington justified heavy bombardment of the countryside of South Vietnam as means to drive the peasants and supporters of the Vietcong into urban areas.[37] More recently, in his article "The Hispanic Challenge" published in the 2004 March-April issue of *Foreign Policy,* Huntington assures that

> The persistent inflow of Hispanic immigrants threatens to divide the United States into two peoples, two cultures, and two languages. Unlike past immigrant groups, Mexicans and other Latinos have not assimilated into mainstream US culture, forming instead their own political and linguistic enclaves – from Los Angeles to Miami – and rejecting the Anglo-Protestant

[37] Such belligerent discourse was defended by Huntington also in his1968 article "The Bases of Accommodation," published in the 1968 July issue of *Foreign Affairs*.

> values that built the American dream. The United States ignores this challenge and its peril. (Huntington, 2004, p. 30)

Huntington’s theory of the clash of civilizations was heavily – and fortunately – criticized from a myriad of paradigms. Tusicisny, in his article “Civilizational Conflicts: More Frequent, Longer and Bloddier?” (2004) published in the 41st issue of the *Journal of Peace Research* addressed Huntington’s simplistic and reductionist criteria when establishing the civilizational blocs, specifically Huntington’s inclusion of Vietnam into the same “civilizational” category of China (Tusicisny, 2004). According to Tusicisny, the cultural differences between China and Japan are not more important than between China and Vietnam. However, Huntington puts together Vietnam and China under the label of the Sinic civilization while Japan is supposed to form a separate civilization. In fact, Vietnam keeps a massive army mostly to guard against China. To Tusicisny, “Huntington relies mostly on anecdotal evidence. On the contrary, more rigorous empirical studies show no particular increase in the frequency of intercivilizational conflicts in the post-cold War period” (Tusicisny, 2004, p. 485-98).

Russet, O’Neal, and Cox, in their co-authored article “Clash of Civilizations, or Realism and Liberalism Déjà Vu?” (2000) published in the 37th issue of the *Journal of Peace Research* argued that Huntington’s identified civilizations are fractured and show little internal unity. According to Russet, O’Neal, and Cox, the Muslim world is severely fractured along ethnic lines with Kurds, Arabs, Persians, Turks, Pakistanis, and Indonesians all having very different world views. Russett, O’Neal, and Cox also claimed that values are more easily transmitted and altered than Huntington proposed. Nations such as India and Japan have become successful democracies and the West itself was profuse with despotism and fundamentalism for most of its history. Russett, O’Neal, and Cox conclude that Huntington’s thesis does

not but self-fulfil its prophecies and reassert differences between civilizations (Russet, O'Neal and Cox, 2000, p. 583-608).

The prestigious American journalist Paul Bernan, in his book *Terror and Liberalism* (2003), criticized Huntington's theory of the clash on the basis that, according to Bernan, strict cultural boundaries do not exist in the present day. According to him, there is no "Islamic civilization" or "Western civilization," and the evidence that Huntington posits for a civilizational clash is not convincing (Bernan, 2003). Bernan cites examples such as the relationship between the United States and Saudi Arabia, or the current multiculturalism of a great amount of cities all over the world as proofs of the implausibility of such a clash. According to Bernan, conflicts arise because of philosophical beliefs between groups, regardless of cultural or religious identity (Bernan, 2003).

When the popularity of the theory of the clash of civilizations re-emerged after the attacks of September 11, 2001, Edward Said published on October 22, 2001, in *The Nation* an essay titled "The Clash of Ignorance" in which he criticized Huntington's categorization of the world's fixed "civilizations" because, among other things, it omitted the dynamics interdependency and interaction of culture. Said warned of the dangers of making

> ... "civilizations" and "identities" into what they are not: shut down, sealed off entities that have been purged of the myriad currents and counter-currents that animate human history, and that over centuries have made it possible for that history not only to contain wars of religion and imperial conquest but also to be one of exchange, cross-fertilization and sharing. (Said, 2001)

Said also condemned Huntington for picking up the anti-Islam polemical rhetoric of Bernard Lewis: "Like Lewis, Huntington defines Islamic civilization reductively, as if what matters most about it is its supposed anti-Westernism" (Said, 2001). Indeed, over-generalization and absurd reductivism were the principal targets of Said's

criticism of Huntington and Lewis. While both of them see “common objective elements” throughout the Islamic civilization, Said sees a vast diversity that could not be reduced to a civilizational “Other” neatly counterpoised against the West. In the same direction than Russett, O’Neal, and Cox, Said also contemplated Huntington’s “imagined geography” as a particular presentation of the world that in a certain way legitimates certain aggressive politics (Said, 2001).

Finally, one of the strongest criticisms of Huntington’s theory and its supposed connections with 9/11 came from Hunt. In his essay “In the Wake of September 11: The Clash of What?” published in *The Journal of American History*’s September 2002 special issue, Hunt argued:

> Let us begin by considering the two most popular ways of interpretively framing the crisis of September 11. One reading with perhaps the widest currency derives from Samuel P. Huntington. In 1993 he advanced the view that the United Sates as the leader of the West was caught in a clash of civilizations. The main challenge, as he saw it, came from Confucian Asia (primarily China) and the Islamic world (Iran seemed at the time of the writing the embodiment of militant regional resistance). Huntington’s interpretation, with its stark and value-laden delineation of regions in conflict, commanded considerable attention when it appeared and has won fresh converts in the wake of September 11. This “clash” interpretation has flaws that are troubling but also familiar in American foreign policy thinking. Huntington’s notion of civilization is monolithic, static and essentialist – much like the Cold War–era view of the Communist enemy… Seen in even longer-term perspective, Huntington is heir to one of the most ethnocentric and aggressive notions in American history. Like nineteenth-century advocates of Manifest Destiny faced by the perceived barbarism of Native Americans, Latin Americans, the Spanish, and the Chinese, he posits US civilizational superiority and on that basis calls for a kind of moral rearmament to promote and defend Western values. In his construction, countries determined to find their own way are not part of a culturally diverse world, but wrong-headed rebels against a preponderant and enlightened West. (Hunt, 2002, p. 9-10)

In recent years and responding to Huntington’s clash of civilizations, a counter-theory that has become the center of some international attention is the theory of the “dialogue among civilizations.” The concept was introduced by former Iranian

President Mohammed Khatami during a speech at the United Nations Headquarters in New York on September 5, 2000:

> There are two ways to realize dialogue among civilizations. First, actual instances of the interaction and interpenetration of cultures and civilizations with each other, resulting from a variety of factors, present one mode in which this dialogue takes place. This mode of interaction is clearly involuntary and optional and occurs in an unpremeditated fashion, driven primarily by vagaries of social events, geographical situation and historical contingency. Second, alternatively, dialogue among civilizations could also mean a deliberate dialogue among representative members of various civilizations such as scholars, artists and philosophers from disparate civilizational domains. In this latter sense, dialogue entails a deliberate act based upon premeditated indulgence and does not rise and fall at the mercy of historical and geographical contingency… The political translation of dialogue among civilizations would consist in arguing that culture, morality and art must prevail on politics. (Khatami, 2000)

Such was the impression caused by Khatami's speech that United Nations resolved to name the year 2001 as the Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. In January 2006, Khatami officially inaugurated the "International Center of Dialogue Among Civilizations," an NGO with offices in Iran and Europe that he is heading since his retirement from the government in September 2005.

In spite of all these reactions from different spheres against Huntington's belligerent theory, his catastrophist and racially-prejudiced thesis also had an enormous influence on many artistic works within the corpus of 9/11 fictions that this project is occupied with. One of the most representative examples of the presence of Huntington's discourse in a 9/11 fictional piece is David Swanner's novel *The Fateful Cause: The Novel that Reveals the Truth Behind 9/11* (2005). Swanner's approach to the 9/11 event is also supposedly "historical," that it, he attempts in his novel to trace back the origins and original motivations, according to him, of the 9/11 attacks. His Foreward to the novel opens: "The piracy and mass murders of September 11, 2001,

began with a conflict between two sons of Abraham, Isaac and Ishmael, as first recorded in the book of Genesis" (Swanner, 2005, p. 1).[38]

Swanner's version of the brothers' fight is primarily focused on the resulting resentment between them:

> Abraham disinherited Ishmael.
> "And Abraham gave all that he had unto Isaac" (Gen 25:5 – The Holy Bible)
> Deep resentment festered between the two brothers. Abraham's disinheriting Ishmael caused Isaac to feel superior and contemptuous of his brother and his progeny [Ishmael's] felt jealous, inferior, less than equal, and betrayed. Isaac alone acquired the great wealth of Abraham. Isaac fathered the Jewish nation of Hebrews, and Ishmael fathered the Islamic nation of Moslems. Resentment has grown over the ensuing forty centuries which has intensified into world-class hatred. Both the followers of the Judeo-Christian belief and Moslems adhere to text that strongly expresses that theirs is the single path toward pleasing God.
> "Those that make war against God and His apostle [Mohammad] and spread disorder in the land shall be slain or crucified or have their hands and feet cut off on alternated sides, or be banished from the land." (5:31 the Table – The Koran)
> Therefore, the Nation(s) of Islam embrace their official policy of death or dismemberment. The Bible, on the other hand, states "Jesus saith unto him. I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." (John 14:6 – The Holy Bible). (Swanner, 2005, p. 2)

Swanner's novel is indeed full of biblical quotations, yet the very few mentioned of the Koran always portray Islam as a synonym of violence and destruction on the Muslims' part, as when later Swanner quotes: "God may test the faithful and annihilate the infidels" (3:140 the Imams – The Koran) (Swanner, 2005, p. 27).

Like Huntington does in his article, Swanner predicts in his Foreword to the novel the end of the world by a class of civilizations. Swanner quotes the Bible to argue his opinions:

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[38] This is not the first time that Isaac and Ishmael's dispute is referred by a 9/11 fictional work. We already saw how the fictional First Wife interpreted by Stockard Channing in the TV Series *The West Wing* described this biblical altercation to a presidential class in the special 9/11 episode of the series precisely titled "Isaac and Ishmael" (see Chapter Six, p. 139-40).

> "For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places." (Mat 24:7 – The Holy Bible)
> "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." (Mat 24:14 – The Holy Bible). (Swanner, 2005, p. 2)

Swanner is even more precise than Huntington and takes a risk giving a concrete date. Based upon Isaiah's "supposedly fulfilled" prediction in the Bible about the birth of the state of Israel, Swanner considers this event as the starting point of a countdown to the end of the world by a clash of cultures:

> Conjectures about the end times have been premature. There is however, one glaring exception. A most significant A most significant prophecy of Isaiah's has been most recently fulfilled during my life time. The recreation of the state of Israel occurred in May 14, 1948 by a vote cast in the United Nations in New York City.
> "…Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? Or shall a nation be born at once? For as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children." (Isa 66:8 – The Holy Bible)
> This prophetic event, this miracle started a time clock, and the final countdown may have been set in motion, i.e. "This generation shall not pass away till all (the prophecies) be fulfilled."
> "Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled." (Mat 24:34 – the Holy Bible)…
> Mathew, Mark, and Luke all agree on this message. I conclude that "this generation" refers to that time span defined in years as "three score to ten."
> "Then the angel of the Lord answered and said, O Lord of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these *threescore and ten years*?" (Zec 1:12 – the Holy Bible)
> Therefore, 1948 plus 70 years equals the year 2018. "All be fulfilled" and "all these things be done or fulfilled" is probably our clue that May 14, 2018, will mark the end of time" (Swanner 2-3).

May 14, 2018. Very precise indeed, especially considering that Swanner's principal and only sources are his particular interpretations of a religious book that dates back to almost two thousand years ago. Moreover, considering those significant

modifications that the Bible has suffered throughout history according to historical, papal synods that included or excluded parts of it at choice.[39]

If Swanner predicts in his Foreword the end of the world by a clash on May 14, 2018, the rest of the book consists of his particular reading of different events of the history of humanity in such a way that they seem to suit his prophecy. Swanner starts with the fight between the brothers Isaac and Ishmael narrated in the Bible (where else), a typological "classic" considering other fraternal, mythical, and "foundational" quarrels like those between Cain and Abel, or Romulus and Remus.

In his particular review of history, Swanner includes a fictional interview carried out by him to the prophet Mohammed:

> Swanner: Why do you believe the world of Islam is prospering at the expense of other religions?
> Mohammed: … your countries throughout Christendom embrace the laws of man as revealed and re-revealed by legions of parasitic lawyers. Moslems follow the laws of God, the pure, clean guidelines of the Koran…
> Swanner: What do you have against the Jews?
> Mohammed: … The Jews are rich. Israel inherited the wealth of Father Abraham while Ishmael was disinherited… We do not covet their riches rather we are offended that they chose to hoard Abraham's ancestral wealth instead of offering to share with us, their blood brothers. Recently, they spent some of their surplus wealth when they brought the service of the United Nations who, for money, passed the law creating the land of Israel by stealing our people's ancestral home-land of Palestine…
> Swanner: Why did your people attack America, killing innocent thousands?
> Mohammed: America first insulted Islam by creating the unsavoury oil community of ARAMCO, in Saudi Arabia, within the holy shadow of Mecca itself… American and European women do not conceal their modesty behind veils… (Swanner, 2005, p. 20-32).

It is observable how, by impersonating the figure of the prophet Mohammed, Swanner attributes the entire Islam certain attitudes by placing at its very origin issues like a supposed hatred for all Jews and an alleged desire to kill "innocent Americans" at a moment when there were just Native Americans (Swanner, 2005, p. 24). Besides,

[39] These modifications of the Bible have not been accepted by all religious communities who use parts of the Bible as sacred text. For instance, Orthodox Judaims rejects most of these changes.

Swanner takes profit from the occasion of being Mohammed to repeat his own political opinions and beliefs yet as if they were corroborated by Mohammad himself, as when Swanner makes Mohammad cite Abraham's disinheriting of Ishmael, an episode which Swanner, and not his fictional Mohammed, seems to be obsessed with. Moreover, Swanner's impersonation of Mohammed when describing the immodesty of "American and European women" is accompanied by photos of Arab women with burqas as a means to frighten the readers and remind them the unfair situation of women in Islam, as if it were an issue closely related with the 9/11 attacks.

Other historical figures besides Mohammed that appear in Swanner's narrative are Henry Ford, the Wright brothers, John Rockefeller, and Lawrence of Arabia. Regarding this latter, Swanner includes in his novel a review of David Lean's 1962 homonym film *Lawrence of Arabia*, which Swanner also sees as another ultimate motive for 9/11: "Hollywood, by releasing films such as *Sheik of Arabia*, *Desert Sands* and *Lawrence of Arabia* has repeatedly ridiculed the Islamic nations to international audiences. The world of Islam seethes with indignation and unanswered insult. It isn't funny. They [Muslims] yearn for vengeance against America" (p. 67).

Certainly, it is not funny at all Swanner's abuse of historical discourses and cultural products to justify his "biblical" enactment of they, Muslims, against Us, Americans. As Spanish, I felt personally shocked by Swanner's description of how, according to him, Spanish people welcomed the United States' invasion of Iraq in 2003. Swanner introduces this topic in the chapter "Public Opinion," addressing directly the reader: "Your author wanted to know what people around the world thought about the American presence in Iraq. I e-mailed a number of correspondents asking their opinion. Here are the responses" (p. 154). After including a series of self-congratulatory and supposedly "real" e-mails, in the style of "Look forward to reading

your book when it's published in the UK" (p. 155), or "Hey I am excited about your next book, the plot sounds great and I think you are on to a winner here" (p. 156), it comes Swanner's request via e-mail to a Mr. Sam who supposedly lives in Spain: "Americans are proud of the British and US Marines. We are also concerned about Islamic retaliation. What is the opinion in Spain? When I was in Tormelinous [Torremolinos, Málaga] last month I saw few "NO WAR" signs. I wish to know your opinion. Sincerely, Dave Swanner" (p. 155). Swanner does not include Mr. Sam's answer to his mail, but Swanner directly claims, not as part of any mail but in the main body of the novel: "Spanish people are proud of US and British Marines. There are only few socialist people who don't want the war, and, of course, the TV and the press emphasize this minority" (p. 156). Swanner's opinions on this issue may be biased due to his own personal records, as he enlisted in the Marines in 1957. However, Swanner's overlook and disqualification of thousands of demonstrations against the US invasion of Iraq, not only in Spain but all over the world, is not only misguiding but inadmissible.

The most relevant aspect of Swanner's novel concerning this project is how, throughout his particular voyage through the history of mankind, Islam gets linked to violence and is perceived as a "menace" whenever it appears. Firstly, through the Koran, as the passages selected from it by Swanner in the novel always allude to an alleged wild instinct on Muslims: "The Koran states: 'When you meet the unbelievers in the battlefield strike off their heads and, when you have laid them low, bind your captives firmly.' (47:3 Muhammad – The Koran)" (Swanner, 2005, p. 7). Even when Swanner cites the Bible, it is sometimes used to attack Islam by referring to the predestined and inherent "wildness" that characterizes Muslims from their very origin in the figure of Ishmael:

> Hagar, the servant of Sarah, Abraham's wife, bore a son fathered by Abraham whom the angel of the Lord instructed that he should be named Ishmael. "…And he [Ishmael] will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren." (Gen 16:11-16:12 – the Holy Bible) (Swanner, 2005, p. 11).

Swanner also uses his own words to describe Ishmael and his descendants' "wildness":

> Ishmael's twelve sons grew to become the Saracen Princes each who fathered and led one of the founding families of the soon-to-emerge nation of Islam. Described by the very words of God is the founding of the first seeds of the first family of the world's most feared, the hard charging breeders of the Arabian stallions and creators of the curved blade Scimitar Sword… "A wild man" is a description spoken only one of the world's toughest warrior who fathered a nation of warriors. This "wild man" was endowed by God himself as the lone wolf…
> The wealthy hard-working descendants of Israel and the ferocious, hard-fighting descendants of Ishmael, each the sons of Abraham, encounter each other repeatedly. They share a preordained destiny… (Swanner, 2005, p. 11-12)

This "preordained destiny" pointed by Swanner gets fully manifested in how Swanner imagines the conspiracy that resulted in the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Swanner dramatizes in his novel a conference organized by Osama Bin Laden whose "hatred of Americans, with particular spite against their despised US Marine Corps is legendary" (p. 81). The fact that Swanner is an ex marine reveals to what extent he may suffer from persecution complex. Swanner extends his paranoias to the US, which he imagines in constant danger by a varied set of conspirators, as it shows the worldwide attendants to the "ominous" conference he portrays:

> Also present in the large, opulent chamber are Colonel Muammar Khadafy of Lybia, Sadam Hussein, President of Iraq, Ling Qu Len, Premiere of Chine, and distinguished emissaries from the countries of North Korea, Yemen, Rwanda, Cuba, Japan, Honduras, Panama, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Iran, Afghanistan, Oman and Syria. Kuwait declined to authorize a representative to attend a meeting for this anti-American gathering…
> Premiere Qu Len of China, as host, presents the first address. "Brothers of many nations we are united in a common cause. Greetings to you revered leaders and representatives of the nations of Islam, Europe, Africa, the Americas, and Asia…. We, jointly and severally, for varied reasons, share a common enemy, the United States of America… Honored delegates allow me

> to introduce our primary speaker, the honorable Osama Bin Laden from the holy Islamic Kingdom of Saudi Arabia." Qu Len stepped aside, surrendering the podium to the featured speaker.
> His black eyes glint with cold malice as he makes eye contact with delegates left and right… "Action, not impotent demonstration, is called for… I call upon all True Believers in the Faith to join me in this jihad… The American homeland, naively believed impervious to attack, will be attacked by forces from the Secret Soldiers of the Holy Islamic Army of Martyrs." (p. 83-84)

Swanner recreates in such a way how Bin Laden, with his eyes glinting "with cold malice," convinced the rest of the conference attendants to plot against the United States. We already addressed how Edward Said accused Huntington's particular presentation of the world of legitimizing certain aggressive politics, and how Russet, O'Neal, and Cox assured that Huntington's thesis self-fulfilled its prophecies and reasserted differences between civilizations. Exactly the same arguments can be claimed about Swanner's novel, as both fictional – Swanner's – and non-fictional – Huntington's – discourses share the fatalistic belief, supposedly based on historical reasons, that the end of the world will come soon because of civilizational conflicts originated by non-Western cultures portrayed as anxious to combat and destroy the West.

According to Huntington, the principal enemies of the United States – against whom the West must be ready to contend – were Islam and China. Swanner's literary career seems to mark identical targets. The novel that we are discussing, Swanner's *The Fateful Cause*, is his second work. His first was *Sleeping Giant Wakens* (2001), in which he dramatizes a prophecy regarding Chinese people attacking the rest of the world. Swanner describes China as a "large, heavily populated, warlike, nation with a history of creating enormous military projects of biblical proportions – biblical, what else can be expected from Swanner – attacking across a body of water for a great battle" (Swanner, 2005, p. 5). The proofs presented by Swanner to support his warmongering and racially-prejudiced theory come, once again, from the Bible:

> "Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates. And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men. And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand." (Rev 16:12-16:16 – The Holy Bible)
> Two hundred million is the number of soldiers currently in the Chinese Army. I reasoned that "the great river Euphrates" may be symbolic of the Pacific Ocean, and the clever Chinese might fashion a method to ferry their armies of millions, concealed by stealth technology, to invade America, to have the United States substitute as a symbolic Armageddon" (Swanner, 2005, p. 5-6).

At least, Swanner does not give an exact date of when the "clever" Chinese will invade America, something that he does in his second novel as it closes with the "furious" Muslims destroying the world on May 14, 2018. Fortunately, according to Swanner, there is Jesus Christ who returns to Earth again on that exact day to start a new beginning.

Swanner's vision of Christianity is also very particular indeed. According to him, "Planet Earth, upon the installation of the government of our next monarch, Jesus Christ, will reign with the rank of prince, answerable only to the king, God, our creator" (p. 5). Even Swanner is able to identify the figure of the anti-Christ and describe the fundamental dates of its malignant career:

> The name or number of the Anti-Christ, 666, referred to what I presumed was his birth date: June 6, 1966… The anti-Christ would follow Christ's timetable and at age 30, on June 6, 1996, he would emerge, begin his anti theistic ministry, and become known to all mankind. We know how accurate that was... The world is prepared for the emergence of Doctor Hermine Octo of Syria… Doctor Octo, the junior delegate to the United Nations, is a politician, a righteous man by Syrian standards, having three wives, two kept in secret. Doctor Octo is nominated as a candidate for secretary general of the United Nations in 2008. Doctor Octo is the beast described in Revelation whose name is the number 666. (Swanner, 2005, p. 193)

It is difficult to determine who this Doctor Octo represents – perhaps one of Swanner's enemies in the marines? – in spite of the "accuracy" with which Swanner invests his prophecies. Nevertheless, Swanner's biggest extravagance comes when he

personally links in his Preface his Christian fundamentalist beliefs to a number of Princes of God who inhabit other planets:

> God has many sons, princes all, but Jesus Christ is the sole “human” son of God born of woman. This birth makes Jesus part man thereby uniquely qualifying him to rule Earth, the world of men. The other princes of God may well live in alien world, not homo sapiens, probably non mammalian, that is their bodies are of other worlds, they are able to live in habitats peculiar to alien worlds such as Jupiter where the inhabitants may breathe ammonia or Venus where Venusians can walk erect in bodies born to move in gravity many times greater than Earth. Even others may live deep in oceans and breathe through gills… I think we, here on Earth, are being observed, studied, and evaluated, by present members of the Kingdom of God… The Bible prepares us to witness: “wonders in heaven”… And when Jesus Christ returns to reign over Earth, we shall join this confederation of planets, this kingdom of God, a spiritual kingdom that will be always with us. DNA has been discovered on meteorites that have fallen to Earth [no citation is provided on this last issue of DNA discovered on meteorites]. (p. 4-5)

Although Swanner and Huntington are different in the sense that the former is a third-rate novelist and the latter a reputed scholar – with whom I strongly disagree –, both act as catastrophist prophets forecasting an imminent clash of civilizations and cultures which does not but reinforce differences and mutual fears among such civilizations so ill-categorized and ill-defined. The most dangerous element of these visions is actually the fact that political leaders are and have been influenced and advised by such warmongering theorists, as it is the case of Huntington working for former US President Lyndon B. Johnson. It is a comfort to know that these same theories are and have been strongly criticized by other international scholars and heads of state like Khatami, former President of Iran, who against the grain, defended in such a way the dialogue among civilizations:

> Dialogue is not easy. It is even more difficult to prepare and open up vistas upon one’s inner existence to others. A belief in dialogue paves the way for vivacious hope: the hope of living in a world permeated by virtue, humility and love, and not merely by the reign of economic indices and destructive weapons. Should the spirit of dialogue prevail, humanity, culture and civilization should prevail. We should all have faith in this triumph and we should all hope that all citizens of the world will be prepared. (Khatami, 2000)

Chapter 13

Beau Smith's comic "Soldiers":

Selling 9/11 as the New Pearl Harbor

Every time the American media opted to approach the 9/11 attacks as an historical event, Pearl Harbor emerged as the mandatory reference. In "Pearl Harbor Parallels 9-11" (2006), the journalist Donna Miles summarized the analogies between both attacks against the US assuring that they both "caught the country by surprise, rallied its people against their attackers and thrust the nation into a long difficult war against tyranny" (Miles, 2006). The military forces followed the same path when contextualizing 9/11 into history, as when Admiral Mike Mullen, current Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff – the highest ranking officer in the US armed forces – compared WWII and the ongoing War on Terror remarking that in WWII "there were clearly two competing visions of the world: one of freedom, and one of tyranny," while now, "the struggle we currently face is also about two competing visions of the future and our vision of hope and prosperity and a secure future for our children and all children… In the twenty-first century, freedom is again under attack" (Miles, 2006). Political leaders were not exempt from this historical analogy so in vogue, as when President George W. Bush remarked at the USS Enterprise Naval Station on December 7, 2001, that

> What happened at Pearl Harbor was the start of a long and terrible war for America. Yet, out of that surprise attack grew a steadfast resolve that made America freedom's defender. And that mission – our great calling – continues to this hour, as the brave men and women of our military fight the forces of terror in Afghanistan and around the world…The terrorists are the heirs to fascism. (Bush, 2001, p. 1492)

It was inevitable that 9/11 fiction fell into this same analogy when contextualizing the attacks into history. One of the works that virtually reproduces

word by word these discourses that abuse history to justify political belligerent decisions is the comic “Soldiers” by Beau Smith. It starts with a group of male soldiers on a helicopter approaching an unknown “war” scenario. The text remarks how “In War a soldier’s mind runs a different path than others. It runs like a computer searching for the right scenario. The thoughts greased with anticipation and fuelled by adrenaline... But this was not another mission... The months of intense training would prepare the body, the mind... but never the soul” (Khan, 2002, p. 89). The comic shows how the far scenario turned out to be Ground Zero (see fig. 13.1).

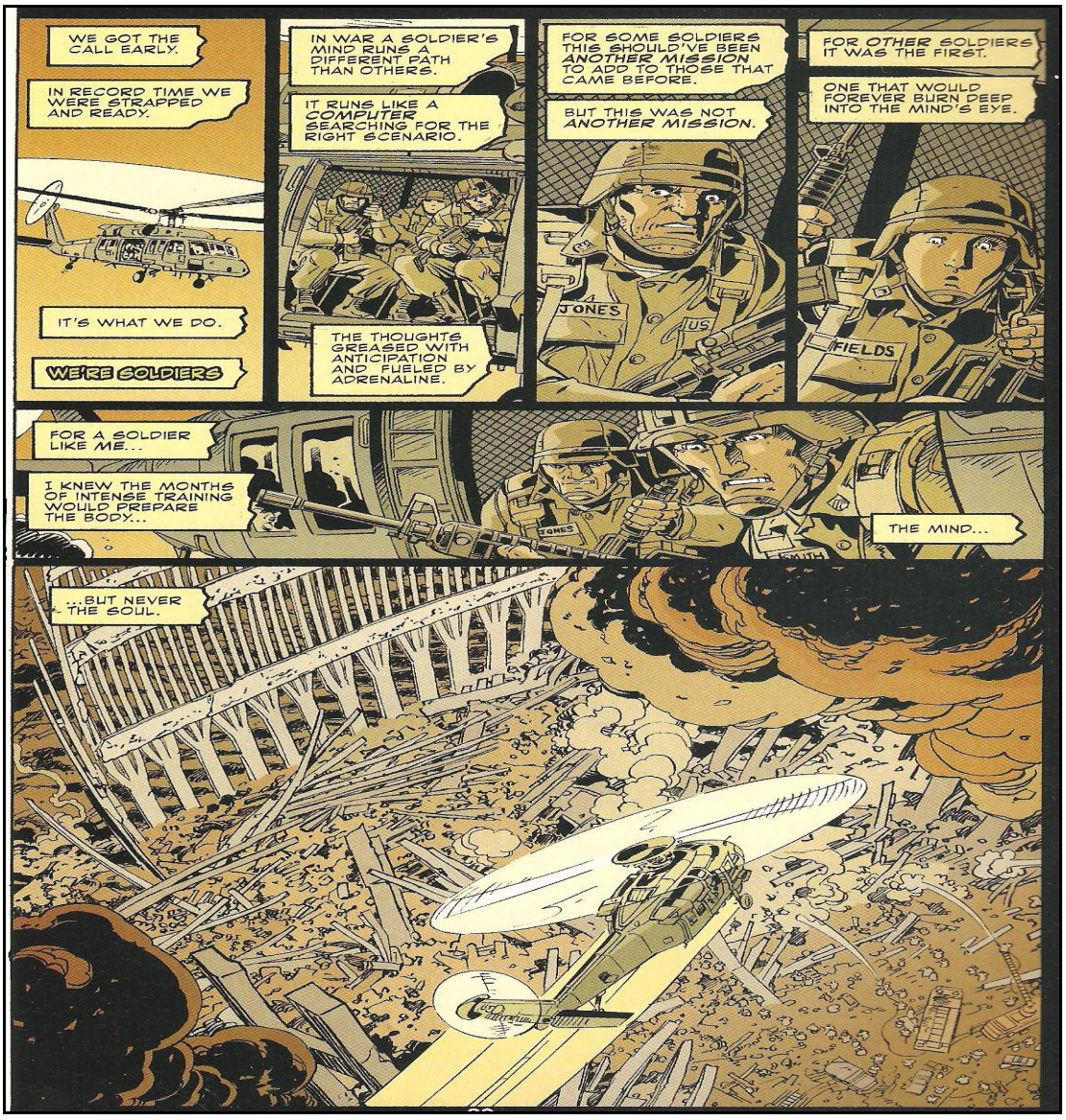

Figure 13.1.

The start of the comic could not be less biased: not only it designates directly Ground Zero as a war site, and the event *per se* as a war conflict that requires military action, but it also makes emphasis on how different is war abroad, with soldiers as cold as computers yet full of anticipation and adrenaline – in other words, excitement to start the killing –, from an attack at home, something for what their fragile souls are not prepared. According to the comic, when soldiers kill "people" abroad, their souls are less moved than when answering an emergency call at home, which does not but create two very distinct categories of victims. The comic indeed portrays what Judith Butler denounces in "Violence, Mourning, Politics" when she argues that according to most 9/11 narratives, "some lives are grievable, and other are not; the differential allocation of grievability that decides what kind of subject is and must be grieved, and which kind of subject must not, operates to produce and maintain certain exclusionary conception of who is normatively human" (Butler, 2004, p. xiv).

If President Bush did not last in naming the 9/11 event as an act of war, a label which allowed him to start the counterattack of his so-called War on Terror, the comic mimics both these references by starring soldiers whose souls get hurt when realizing that their mission takes place in the US and not abroad. Noam Chomsky traced back the history of the "names" of the conflict, recalling how at first the US used the term "crusade" for its counteraction, but "it was quickly pointed out that if they hope to enlist their allies in the Islamic world," such name "would be a serious mistake, for obvious reasons" (Chomsky, 2002, p. 14). Chomsky underlined that the label "humanitarian intervention" was also considered, as it had already been used by Japan to designate its invasion of Manchuria, by Mussolini to refer to his invasion of Ethiopia, and even by Hitler to allude to his takeover of the Sudetenland (Chomsky, 2001, p. 15). By virtue of such anti-American precedents, "humanitarian intervention"

was rejected and the term "war" was eventually chosen for its enormous possibilities when justifying the economic inversion that the military forces would require to sustain such spectacular deployment. Chomsky concluded that the most proper term to refer to the 9/11 attacks would be "crime," perhaps "crime against humanity," and as there are laws for punishing crimes, the solution would not be based on air-bombing campaigns in Afghanistan but on the identification of the perpetrators and organizers and their subjection to international trials (Chomsky, 2002, p. 15).

The rest of Smith's comic portrays how this unit of US soldiers – all male – helps cops and firefighters – all male too – in the rescue of a woman and a little girl at Ground Zero, enacting what it was denounced by Harney in *Social Text* as the deliberately construction of the 9/11 white male hero:

> The people's rescue brigades that formed spontaneously after the collapse of the two towers gave way reluctantly, and in some cases under state force, to the binary of victims and heroes. The mobile subjectivities on the missing posters that adorned statues in Union Square were appropriately scraped away by Work Experience Program workers in an early-morning October downpour. Heroes replaced these brigades and posters in the public view, and the heroes were the Fire Department of New York Officers [94% white males], New York Police Department Officers [Out of hundreds of uniformed service workers killed in the WTC attack, only twenty-three were African American] and soon United States Special Forces and Central Intelligence agents… Terror reduced the victims to heroes, and the heroes to white men, relegating all others – the living to future victims and suspects, and the dead to serial newspapers obituaries. (Harney, 2002, p. 14-17)

Indeed, after 9/11, the efforts by the United States' Ideological State Apparatuses to impose the image of a "strong nation" brought with it a regressive restoration of a traditional, male chauvinistic paradigm in the public discourse.

At home, the new heroism extolled the American male – and white – worker, be he a fire-fighter or a policeman, while there was little mention of women fire-fighters or heroic women in general. The *New York Times* also made echo of this "macho" fashion: "The operative word is *men*: brawny, heroic, manly men. The male

hero expresses the new selflessness of masculinism. Physical prowess is back in vogue along with patriotism" (Leigh Brown, 2001). As Eisenstein denounced in "Feminism in the Aftermath of September 11," "Women, who are busy trying to rebuild the lives of their families while they scramble to get to their jobs as well, are shunted to the side – seen only through the veil of motherhood and wifely duty" (Eisenstein, 2002, p. 86).

Abroad, US foreign policies reproduced the trope of rescuing women and children, which, as Rosenberg posited, emerged "from a social imaginary dominated by a masculinized nation state that casts itself in a paternal role, saving those who are abused by rival men and nations" (Rosenberg, 2003, p. 86).

It is towards the end of Smith's comic when it compares the 9/11 attacks with World War II. After reinforcing the militarization of the conflict with a panel in which an enormous American flag flutters behind the successful rescue unit under the text "On that day we were all soldiers," the story follows:

> But in the days to come this country will call for a *different* kind of soldier. One who is trained to take the war to those that have attacked our own shores. That call has come. The war of my grandfather was like that of *hunting* bear. It stood tall and challenged you to face it. There was a certain sense of honor in that. But this is not my grandfather's war. This is a war of *rats*. There's only one way to hunt rats that bite and then scurry off into dark holes. You send rat terriers into those holes after them. And they don't come out until all the rats are dead. We are those rat terriers. We're soldiers. (Khan, 2002, p. 94) (emphasis added by the author) (see fig. 13.2 and 13.3)

Figure 13.2

Figure 13.3

Not only this entire passage displays a manifest cry for war "in the days to come," but it also employs an animalistic extended metaphor which compares *à la* Bush the Nazis with the 9/11 terrorists in the benefit of the Nazis. If WWII is described as "bear hunting" and the Nazis as a challenger bear "that stood tall" and whose capture provided a "certain sense of honor," Bush's post-9/11 depictions of the terrorists "hiding in holes" are echoed here as the terrorists are literally referred to as "rats that bite and then scurry into dark holes" – dark motives, dark skin, the uncivilized dark ages in which other countries live… –. Finally, the identification of the US soldiers with "rat terriers…you send into those holes" – very opportune this "you" addressing the reader, as it is the reader's support for military action what the comic actually intends – encourages a total extermination or the indefinite perpetuation of the armed conflict – that today, almost ten years after, still persists – as "the terriers don't come until all the rats are dead."

As it was already shown in Chapter 10, the two most frequent ideographs employed to refer to the 9/11 terrorists both in the corpus of US 9/11 fiction and also within President Bush's post -9/11 public discourses allude to the terrorists' supposedly *archaic* way of living – with *caves/holes* as one of its principal signifiers – and their innate *evil* condition. Now, it is how 9/11 was so mischievously contextualized into history both in fiction and non-fiction the question that occupies us in this chapter, especially to what extent 9/11 was conveniently sold to the audience as the new Pearl Harbor.

Griffin, in *The New Pearl Harbor: Disturbing Questions about the Bush Administration and 9/11* (2004), denounced how the Project for the New American Century, an organization based on Washington DC with enormous influence on high-level US government officials in the Bush Administration, argued in 2000 that only a

new "Pearl Harbor" would enable the military and defense policy transformations the group desired to rapidly take place (Griffin, 2004). The principal goal of this company cofounded by the neoconservatives William Kristol and Robert Kagan is to promote American global leadership through military strength, as in their view, "American leadership is good for America and good for the world."[40] It was Senator John McCain one of the first who publicly compared 9/11 to Pearl Harbor, as the very morning of the 9/11 attacks he remarked that "everybody was talking about the New Pearl Harbor." This McCain's remark and many others in the same style are addressed in depth by Hollenbaugh in his research on how collective memory and public opinion framed in the US the interpretation of 9/11 in relation to Pearl Harbor (Hollenbaugh, 2007).

Among those few who dared to dissent from the mainstream tendency to identify 9/11 as the new Pearl Harbor, there was the journalist Frederich L. Borch, who in the *Journal of Military History* argued that unlike in Pearl Harbor, when 9/11 occurred the US government was not so "unprepared" for it (Borch, 2003). Another journalist, Heather Wokush, went further when she suggested in *Antiwar.com* that neither in Pearl Harbor nor in 9/11 the US government was "unprepared," assuring that in both cases it had previous knowledge of the events that were approaching (Wokush, 2004). Regarding the Pearl Harbor attack, Wokush cited Pulitzer-prize winner Joahn Toland's *Infamy: Pearl Harbor and Its Aftermath* (1982), in which it is revealed that almost everything the Japanese were planning to do was known by many members of Franklin D. Roosevelt's Administration in the morning of the attack, and that they just "let the carnage roll in order to get the US public primed for war with Japan" (Wokush, 2004). Similarly, Jacob Hornberg in his journal *FFF* – Future for

[40] This straight-forward sentence appears at the *Home* section of the *New American Century* web site.

Freedom Foundation – accused both President Bush of "gross negligence" for not having paid attention to those official reports that directly provided information about the incoming attacks, and President Roosevelt for letting Pearl Harbor happen on purpose due to "his fervent desire to involve the US into WWII despite his public assurances to the contrary" (Hornberg, 2002).

If 9/11 and Pearl Harbor are actually to be compared within the public consciousness, it should be on the ground of to what extent civil liberties were lost in the US after both attacks. In "More Safe, Less Free: A Short Story of Wartime Civil Liberties" (2002), Glasser recalls the terrible consequence of Pearl Harbor on those Japanese who were living in the US at the time:

> On December 7, 1941, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, provoking the United States' entrance into WWII and stoking fear throughout the country and especially on its West Coast, , which many felt was vulnerable to Japanese attack and even invasion. In fact, according to army estimates at the time, "there was no real threat of a Japanese invasion." But there were a large number of people of Japanese ancestry living in California, Oregon and Washington. And although they never exceeded more than one percent of the West Coast population, prejudice against Americans of Japanese descent was widespread, especially in California. Fear for domestic security soon led to pressure to "relocate" these Americans. Certainly, the fear of Japan was legitimate. But whether any Americans were made safer by targeting Japanese-Americans was, at best, doubtful. Yet before the hysteria was spent, American public officials, including liberals like then-governor of California Earl Warren and, of course, President Roosevelt, initiated, endorsed, and implemented what in retrospect was the single worst governmental act of racism in our history with the exception of slavery itself.
>
> In the beginning, no one in the national government seriously suggested that anyone be moved. In Hawaii, which actually had been attacked and was much closer to the Pacific war zone, one-third of the population was of Japanese ancestry, yet no one ever proposed evacuating them. On the West Coast, however, the tiny Japanese American community came to be seen as a threat. On February 19, 1942, President Roosevelt signed an executive order authorizing the military to exclude anyone they wanted from any area in the United States, if, in the military's judgment, it was necessary to protect against espionage and sabotage.
>
> In a country gripped by fear, it sounded like a reasonable measure to almost all Americans. But the order allowed the military to precede without t any actual evidence of espionage or sabotage against anyone. One month later, Congress

> passed a law – without a single dissenting vote – making it a federal crime for anyone subject to the order to refuse to “relocate.” And although the executive order on its face applied to any Americans, in practice it was used exclusively against American citizens of Japanese origin.
>
> The new law first subjected anyone of Japanese descent to a curfew: people were not allowed to leave their homes between 8:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m., and even in non-curfew hours they were barred from moving outside a five-mile radius of their homes or places of work. Ultimately, they were forced into camps and the idea of “resettlement” yielded to the reality of detention, under a harsh regime of barbed wire and armed guards that made no adequate provisions for family or personal privacy. By October 30, 1942, 112,000 people, mostly American citizens, were confined in ten camps scattered from the California desert to the swamps of Arkansas. No one of the 112,000 was ever charged with any crime, nor individually accused of espionage or sabotage. No evidence was ever alleged; no hearings held. People were rounded up and detained, their homes and business stolen for the duration of the war solely on the basis of safety and security, but no evidence was presented to support those claims. And nearly all Americans accepted this, looked the other way, and felt safer because they were afraid. What the government was doing seemed reasonable to them under the circumstances.
>
> Forty years later, government documents were revealed that showed the government had knowingly lied to the Supreme Court in claiming that the evacuations were militarily necessary. Even President Reagan in 1988 called the detentions an act of “war hysteria and racism.” But that was forty-six years too late. Liberty matters when liberty is denied. And when liberty wad denied in 1942, no American was made safer, because the targets of the detention posed no threat to public safety. (Glasser, 2002, p. 16-17)

More recent are the scandals of how civil liberties were undermined in the US after 9/11: racial – rather facial – profiling by the military and police officers, indefinite detention of citizens this time of Arab descent who, sometimes without consistent evidence, were tortured in detention camps like Guantanamo or Abu Ghraib. As it was referred in the Introduction to this entire project, in the immediate week following 9/11 there were at least 540 reported attacks on Arab Americans in the United States – compared with a total of 600 in 2001 –, several mosques were vandalized and there were also 200 more reported attacks on Sikhs, citizens of Indian descent who practice Sikhism and wear turbans and beards because of their creed

(Amnesty International, 2001, p. 11). However, all this doesn't seem enough to some, like the journalist Hal Lindsey, who in *Word Net Daily* argued that

> After the Pearl Harbor attack… most Japanese were sent to concentration camps… In the aftermath of September 11, 2001, our government has bent over backwards to assure Americans that the Muslims who attacked us were an aberrant fanatic fringe group that in no way represented true Islam. We have been constantly assured that the "Muslim" religion is a peaceful religion… and yet… from the beginning, Islam's spread was accomplished through physical violence, bloodshed and war… A fundamentalist can be extremely convincing to a moderate Muslim, because he can base his case in the very Foundation of the religion. There are differences between the so-called moderates and the fundamentalists. But hoses differences are rendered meaningless by the verses that teach the opposite… There are 2 billion Muslims in the world… That's a lot, no matter how you interpret it. (Lindsey, 2003)

Such display of warmongering remarks which does not but promote the indefinite detentions of American citizens of Arab descent in concentrations camps *à la* Pearl Harbor has fortunately been criticized and confronted by scholars like Chernus. In his analysis on the creation of myths for *History News Service*, Chernus argued that just as Pearl Harbor needs to be seen in the context of American foreign policy in Asia, September 11 needs to be analyzed in light of US actions in the Muslim world. He stated that it is a "myth" that the United States was "naïve and innocent, isolated from the world" prior to Pearl Harbor, and that the Japanese were simply "the devil incarnate" with "no possible rational motive" for attacking. It is a similar myth to portray the September 11 terrorists simply as "agents of the devil, doing evil for evil's sake, as if their own history and the world's history had nothing to do with it" (Chernus, 2001).

In conclusion, both 9/11 and Pearl Harbor – if we have to compare them at all – are historic events that were abused as discursive arguments by the US government: abroad, to justify prior political decisions involving the US thrust into wars and their consequential economic injection on the US armament industry; at home, curtailing

civil liberties in exchange for a faked increased security. One of the main differences – leaving apart the huge historical, political and personal gap between President Roosevelt and President Bush – is that in the case of Pearl Harbor, the investigations of its irregularities “led to early retirements of some of the military’s highest leadership and blame was spread across the board,” as the journalist Joel Roberts underlined in “Pearl Harbor’s Shadow on 9/11” (2004). We will see how President Bush’s War on Terror is historically evaluated given the perspective of time.

Chapter 14

Sam Glanzman's comic "There were Tears in Her Eyes": 9/11 and the Holocaust

In her Introduction to *Trauma Culture: The Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature* (2005), Kaplan recalled her personal experience of the 9/11 attacks as a traumatic event: "The phenomenon of 9/11 was perhaps the supreme example of a catastrophe that was experienced globally via digital technologies... The events radically altered my relationship to New York, to the United States qua nation, and produced a new personal identity" (Kaplan, 2005, p. 2). Kaplan also narrated how she realized little by little to what extent the 9/11 attacks were being "managed" by institutional forces:

> What did all this flag flying really mean? Certainly, on one level the flags represented a newly engaged patriotism (a patriotism increasingly problematic for me), echoing sentiments written on memorials... It gradually became clear that national ideology was hard at work shaping how the traumatic event was to be perceived... The media aided the attempt to present a united American front. But this proved to be a fiction... the male leaders on television presented a stiff, rigid, controlling, and increasingly vengeful response – a response I only gradually understood as actually about humiliation... a "disciplining" and homogenizing of United States response was at work through the media. (Kaplan, 2005, p. 9,14-15)

It has been said a lot on the concept of *trauma*, especially in recent years in which Trauma Studies are so in vogue. However, the approach to trauma as a discipline originated half a century ago in the context of research about the Holocaust. In fact, virtually the entire current existing analysis of trauma is either purely theoretical and abstract, or linked to Freud's studies on the traumatic experience, or exemplified by and centred on the Holocaust. A combination of these three trends which results very inspiring is Dominick LaCapra's *Writing History, Writing Trauma*

(2001), in which the author describes the concept of historical trauma and some dangers intrinsically linked to it:

> I would reiterate the basic point that historical trauma is related to particular events… such as the Shoah or the dropping of the atom bomb on Japanese cities. The strong temptation with respect to such limit events is to collapse the distinction and to arrive at a conception of the event's absolute uniqueness or even epiphanous, sublime or sacral quality. Perhaps this is the tangled region of thought and affect where one should situate the founding trauma – the trauma that paradoxically becomes the basis for collective or personal identity, or both... the founding trauma typically plays a tendentious ideological role, for example, in terms of the concept of a chosen people or a believe in one's privileged status as victim…The indiscriminate generalization of the category of survivor and the over-all conflation of history or culture with trauma, as well as the near fixation on enacting or acting out post-traumatic symptoms, have the effect of obscuring crucial historical distinctions. (LaCapra, 2001, p. 80-81)

The choice of Sam Glanzman's comic "There Were Tears in Her Eyes" as the last piece to be analyzed in this project is not arbitrary. Not only does it contain some of the most out-of-context demonizations concerning those responsible for the 9/11 terrorist attacks, but it also abuses of historical discourses to display a straightforward cry for war as the only and most urgent response to 9/11. The comic opens with an old man remarking how he "watched in disbelief the cowardly attack by these uncivilized loathsome creatures" (Khan, 2002, p. 207). Some of the ideographical adjectives of this simple sentence like "coward," "uncivilized," and "loathsome" do not but mimic *à la lettre* those formerly used by President George W. Bush in his post-9/11 public discourses, as when he remarked how

> Freedom itself was attacked this morning by a faceless *coward*... Thousands of lives were suddenly ended by evil, *despicable* acts of terror... The *civilized* world is rallying to American side... this is the world's fight. This is *civilizations*' fight... It was an attack on the heart and soul of the *civilized* world. (Bush, 2001, p. 1098, 1099, 1140, 1044, 1219) (emphasis added)

The old man of the comic goes on noticing that "it's as if they raped the Statue of Liberty" (Khan, 2001, p. 207). Once again, President Bush's "Freedom itself was attacked" is echoed in this comparison in which the terrorists are now also rapists, and

the terrorist conflict is presented as if the Statue of Liberty's broken hymen needed to be avenged.

Then, it starts the main body of the comic story, which consists in how this "thoughtless in his thoughts" old man answers his grandson's questions about 9/11 while they go for a walk outside their country house two days after the attacks. As we saw in other 9/11 works – like in the TV Episode of *The West Wing* "Isaac and Ishmael" addressed in Chapter Six –, the plot of the old and "wise" man indoctrinating his grandchild serves as excuse to indoctrinate the American audience on what is to – and must – be thought regarding 9/11. The first of the child's questions is an ethical one as it involves the boy's reluctance to "not hate" the terrorists: "I hate them. But our pastor says we must not hate?... Gran'pa?" (Khan, 2001, p. 207). The sweet grandfather does not hesitate in his "pro-hate" answer: "Damn! Only two days gone by and the grief counselors are busy with their hocus pocus. Their conventional trite consolations, their appeals for forgiveness. Some are even saying this was a crime and not an act of war..." (p. 207). Indeed, these grandpa's words are not but the confirmation of how 9/11 fiction reproduced and helped to overspread so conveniently the Bush Administration's ideology regarding how to label the conflict. As Judith Butler remarked in "Explanation and Exoneration, or What We can Hear," "the terrorists acts were construed as "declarations of war" by the Bush Administration, which then positioned the military response as a justified act of self-defense" (Butler, 2004, p. 4).

The child's second question has to do directly with the terrorists, as the boy asks "What kind of people do these things?" (Khan, 2002, p. 208). The old man responds to his grandson by referring the life and deeds of a fifteenth century Romanian Prince called Vlad the Impaler, a figure in which the legend of Dracula was

inspired due to the Prince’s alleged blood thirst. The grandfather describes then to the child some of the Prince’s appetites while the comic depicts very explicitly some men impaled (see fig. 14.1).

Figure 14.1.

The comic is so explicit that it even includes an alleged face portrait of fifteenth century Prince Vlad, whose almond eyes, prominent nose, turban, long black hair, and moustache turn him into the vivid image of Osama Bin Laden. Meanwhile, the text remarks how “Dracul also means Devil” (see fig. 14.2).

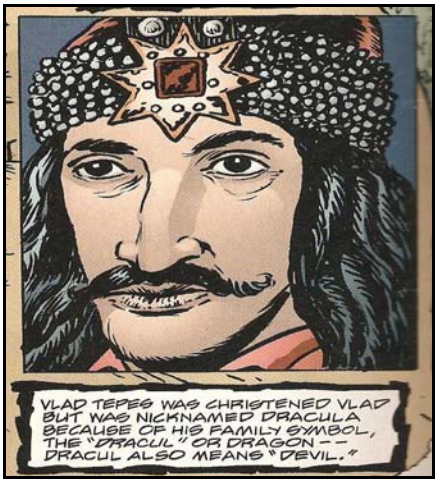

Figure 14.2

After this demonizing characterization so out of context as it mixes legendary, historical, fictional, and even religious characters – the Devil – to allude to the 9/11 terrorists, the child asks his grandfather whether there will be a war like he was in. Then, the old man recalls "his" war and his first stop is Hiroshima. Next to the notorious image of the atomic mushroom, the old man declares: "Hiroshima – where 100,000 men, women, and children were killed by the atomic bomb... Was it a necessary means to correct injustice? I believe so" (p. 219). I must recognize that before reading this "I believe so" I thought that the interrogative "Was it a necessary means...?" was a rhetorical question actually condemning the use of the atomic bomb. I had to read the text twice as I considered unimaginable that nowadays someone, either in fiction or non-fiction, could publicly describe the atomic bomb of Hiroshima as "the necessary means." The old man, the comic, and its author justify the necessity of the atomic bomb at that moment assuring that it "spared not thousands but millions of American and Japanese lives had we attempted to storm Japan's home islands instead of using the bomb" (p. 219). The argument could not be less convincing, as it is based upon the "humanitarian" preference for killing now the not inestimable amount of 100,000 "real" people as the best choice compared to the "imaginary" killing of millions. The text in the panel closes with the following words at the foot of the drawing of the atomic mushroom: "And now, will we wait? Before acting?" (p. 219). It does not but urge some military intervention – at any cost, no matter if we use atomic weapons (?) – on the part of the United States (see fig. 14.3).

Figure 14.3

It is in the following panel when the old man, and by extension the author of the comic, compares the terrorist attack of 9/11 with the Holocaust. On a big and explicit drawing of a common grave full of corpses in what is supposed to be Auschwitz, the grandfather remarks: “By waiting did we allow this? Yes, allowed. By refusing to act early enough did we allow this? I believe it could have been

prevented... Hitler and his butchers could have been stopped had we and other law abiding nations acted earlier (p. 220) (see fig. 14.4).

Figure 14.4

Few photographs and videos have shaken public opinion to such a degree as those that portrayed the horror found by the allied forces when they liberated the concentration camps in 1945. More than fifty years later, a period in which there have been other horrible wars and genocides like the Balkans conflict and the Rwandan

war in the nineties, those now old, black and white images of the piles of corpses in German concentration camps with columns of smoke at the back falling out of crematoriums are still fixed in our memories as a referent of horror. Perhaps because of this reason, it is even more dangerous, harmful, and immoral the abuse of these images that give testimony of the worst that humankind can do, all in order to urge any other contemporary military action at choice not related to the Holocaust itself. In her analysis of our response to images of horror *Regarding the Pain of Others* (2003), Susan Sontag remarked how “Photographs of an atrocity may give rise to opposing responses. A call for peace. A cry for revenge” (Sontag, 2003, p. 11). No doubt that in this case, it is a cry for revenge what the comic attempts to provoke in the reader. In fact, it is the public support of the ongoing War in Afghanistan what is aimed by taking out of context an image of a genocide occurred fifty years ago in another continent, as if 9/11 terrorists were to be blamed for the Holocaust.

When in the Joint Session of Congress on September 20, 2001, President George W. Bush urged every nation of the world to make the decision of “either you are with us or with the terrorists,” he was using a propagandistic technique known as false dilemma or black-and-white fallacy which consists on reducing a whole spectrum of possibilities to just two alternatives presented as mutually exclusive when they are actually not, in order to gain support for one of them, in this case, support for his immediate military intervention in Afghanistan, and by extension, Iraq. The comic that we are analyzing does not but mimic such strategy when it recalls how “we” and “other law-abiding nations” allowed no less than the Holocaust, while prompting urgent military action on the part of the US and its “allies” to fight against the new “axis of evil.” The words “Will we wait? Until it is too late?” connecting both the image of the corpses in Auschwitz, and that of a tearful Statue of Liberty with the

Twin Towers in flames at the back, present the conflict in Afghanistan as the logical action to be undertook in order to prevent events like the Holocaust. It also reinforces the role of the US as the "unbiased" world police and rescuer. Susan Sontag, also in *Regarding the Pain of Others*, remarked something regarding this self-invested role on the part of the US and the question of selective memory:

> Why is not there already, in the nation's capital which happens to be a city whose population is overwhelmingly African-American, a Museum of the History of Slavery? Indeed, there is no Museum of the History of Slavery – the whole story, starting with the slave trade in Africa itself, not just selected parts, such as the Underground Railroad – anywhere in the United States. This, it seems, a memory judged too dangerous to social stability to activate and to create. The Holocaust Memorial Museum and the future American Genocide Museum and Memorial are about what didn't happen in America, so the memory-work doesn't risk arousing an embittered domestic population against authority. To have a museum chronicling the great crime that was African slavery in the United States of America would be to acknowledge that the evil was *here.* Americans prefer to picture the evil that was *there,* and from which the United States – a unique nation, one without any certifiably wicked leaders throughout its entire history – is exempt. That this country, like every other country, has its tragic past does not sit well with the founding, and still all-powerful, belief in American exceptionalism. The national consensus on American history as a history of progress is a new setting for distressing photographs – one that focuses our attention on wrongs, both here and elsewhere, for which America sees itself as the solution or cure. (Sontag, 2003, p. 78-79)

The comic's last drawing representing a feminized statue of liberty crying because of the attacks does not but prompt some "male" military action on the part of the US to repair the damage, therefore perpetuating this vision underlined by Sontag of the US as a cure for the world's evil (see figure 14. 5).

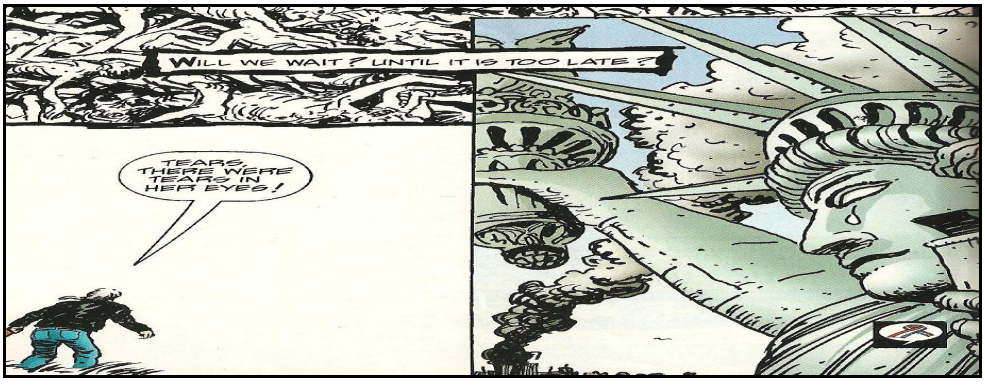

Figure 14.5

Not only are historical and victimizing discourses appropriated by the comic “There were Tears in Her Eyes” to display its recurrent cry for war, but also certain form of male chauvinism disguised as feminism is conveyed when the war in Afghanistan is presented as the necessary means – like Hiroshima – to avenge the Statue of Liberty’s rape and tears that give title to this story.

Conclusion

How to Resist Demonizing and Generalizing Discourses

> We have to give a very complex account of hegemony if we are talking about any real social formation. Above all we have to give an account which allows for its elements of real and constant change. We have to emphasize that hegemony is not singular; indeed that its own internal structures are highly complex, and have continually to be renewed, recreated and defended; and by the same token, that they can be continually challenged and in certain respects modified.
>
> – Raymond Williams, *Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory* (1973)

On September 11, 2001, at 8:46 a.m. a commercial airliner crashed into the North Tower of the World Trade Center. The public and visible narrative of this 9/11 story started a few minutes later, exactly at 9:03, while the news were broadcasting the supposedly "accidental" crash and another commercial plane crashed into the South Tower. It was then when the term "terrorist" came on stage, and when physical and ideological portraits of the figure of the 9/11 terrorist started to be carried out, first by the news, secondly by the Bush Administration, and finally by those pieces of fiction that revisited and re-created the events of that day. Throughout this project it has been proved that such "fictional" representations of the terrorist figure in US fiction is mostly misguided in order to suit certain ideological interests of the nation state, like the War in Afghanistan that started a few days later as a result of the terrorist attacks.

Within the corpus of US fictional works that were inspired on the 9/11 attacks, very few mentioned the hijackers. In fact, the vast majority of these 9/11 works involved memorializing discourses concerning the victims, their families, New York fire-fighters and cops, and ordinary "heroized" Americans – usually white, Anglo-Saxon Christians – who in the ashes of that day "responded with the best of America" (Bush, 2001, p. 99). This project has focused instead on those few 9/11 works which

either referred to the terrorists or represented them. In fact, the project reveals to what extent these fictional representations of the figure of the 9/11 terrorist reproduce anti-Muslim and anti-Arab stereotypes, and how these representations actually mimic post-9/11 ethnic prejudices already displayed by the news media and President Bush in his public discourses following the attacks, all of it configuring a common national "patriotic" *doxa*. However, let us not get the impression that this anti-Middle East attitude is something radically new and exclusive of the post-9/11 period. It is deeply rooted in a past of colonialism and a present of neo-imperialism. No-one expressed it more clearly than Edward Said in *Orientalism* more than thirty years ago:

> Since World War II America has dominated the Orient, and approaches it as France and Britain once did… No production of knowledge in the human sciences can ever ignore or disclaim its author's involvement as a human subject in his own circumstances, then it must also be true that for a European or American studying the Orient there can be no disclaiming the main circumstances of *his* actuality: that he comes up against the Orient as a European or American first, as an individual second. And to be a European or an American in such situation is by no means an inner fact. It meant and means being aware, however dimly, that one belongs to a power with definite interests in the Orient, and more important, that one belongs to a part of the earth with a definite history of involvement in the Orient almost since the time of Homer. (Said, 1978, p. 11)

The novelty regarding this old prejudice in the West against the Orient is that since 9/11, it is not only racially or religiously-oriented but now it is also and most importantly the "Middle Eastern-looks" that matters, and so it is articulated in the public discourse through policies like "facial" profiling or strip searching Muslim, Arab, and Middle Eastern-looking individuals. Another proof that gives testimony of the deep impact of such "facial" prejudiced discourse upon the population is the 200 attacks on Shiks that took place in the streets of the US in the immediate week following 9/11, just because these citizens of Indian descent wore turbans and long beards like the Talibans that appeared on TV did.

This project was structured in four large sections according to the higher or fewer presence of the terrorist figure into the works selected and the thematic approach adopted by each artist when representing the 9/11 terrorists. Part I served as introduction to the topic of terrorism in fiction, as it provided a critical reading of how the figure of the terrorist has been conveyed by fiction in different historical literary periods, and what the academia has more recently said on the specific corpus of 9/11 fiction. Part II "Minimal Portraits" analyzed those works in which the presence of the 9/11 terrorist figure is reduced to the minimum, well because they do not appear in the story at all and are merely discussed or commented by other characters, or well because they appear into the narrative as they are seen by other characters, that is, as linear, shadowy, and simplistic figures who communicate to each other through incomprehensible Arabic shouts. This is the case for instance of the vast majority of works that recreated in fiction the events aboard the hijacked planes. Part III "Terrorists in America" explored works in which the terrorist figure, already a secondary character or even the protagonist of the story, interacts with ordinary US citizens, and how the fictional personality of the 9/11 terrorists, mostly depicted as perverts, irrational, hating, or intrinsically evil creatures, responds in fact to previous stereotypes assumed and perpetuated by their respective authors. If the works studied in the second section demonized the terrorists by focusing on their essentially mental "sickness" on American soil, the last section, Part IV "Terrorists in "Hystoerical" Context" addressed not space but time, approaching those 9/11 fictions that in their attempt to provide an historical frame to the 9/11 events did not refer, as Said posited, to the "history of involving in the Orient almost since the time of Homer," but reproduced instead though fiction fatalistic discourses like Samuel Huntington's notorious "clash of civilizations."

The methodological approach employed throughout this research was basically Foucauldian, in the sense that it has explored how the concept of "suicide terrorist" has been re-constructed through fictional works under certain ideological limitations imposed principally by the media and the Bush administration. The tyranny of these ideological state apparatuses in the Althusserian sense has been so powerful and effective that it is possible to talk about a "9/11 culture" that is observable in everyday situations, from commemorative plaques at the entrance of fire stations across America to disapproving looks when someone with Arab "appearance" boards your same flight.

However, differing for a moment from Jameson in his disbelief in the possibility of escape from the "prison house of language" and the dominant culture (Jameson, 1972), I would like to conclude this project providing some examples of resistance to the hegemonic discourse, in the line of Raymond Williams when, in works like *Problems in Materialism and Culture* (1980), drew his three fold structure of societal discourse recognizing some space if minimal for resistance. Indeed, there were very few 9/11 fictional works brave enough to escape from such prejudiced conventions, positing alternative views many times even unvoiced by non-fictional publications when approaching the 9/11 historical event. If Part II of this project addressed those re-creations of the events that supposedly took place aboard the hijacked planes, among all the material that I have accessed to, there is one single work that sincerely attempts to investigate the hijackers' perspective on the events. It is the comic created by the Croatian-born Igor Kordey, which, in a single panel, depicted the famous "let's roll" moment – when the passengers and crew aboard United 93 attacked the hijackers – under a new prism, portraying a branch of furious passengers armed with knives, forks, and boiling water literally leaping on two

frightened terrorists depicted on the front close to the cockpit (see fig. 15.1). Henry Jenkins, in his already mentioned "Captain America Sheds His Mighty Tears: Comics and September 11," [41] also paid attention to the uniqueness of this comic by Kordey so much "against the grain," remarking how "Kordey invites us to see the events from the terrorists' perspective and encourages us to dwell for a moment on their vulnerability and humanity" (Sherman, 2006, p. 89).

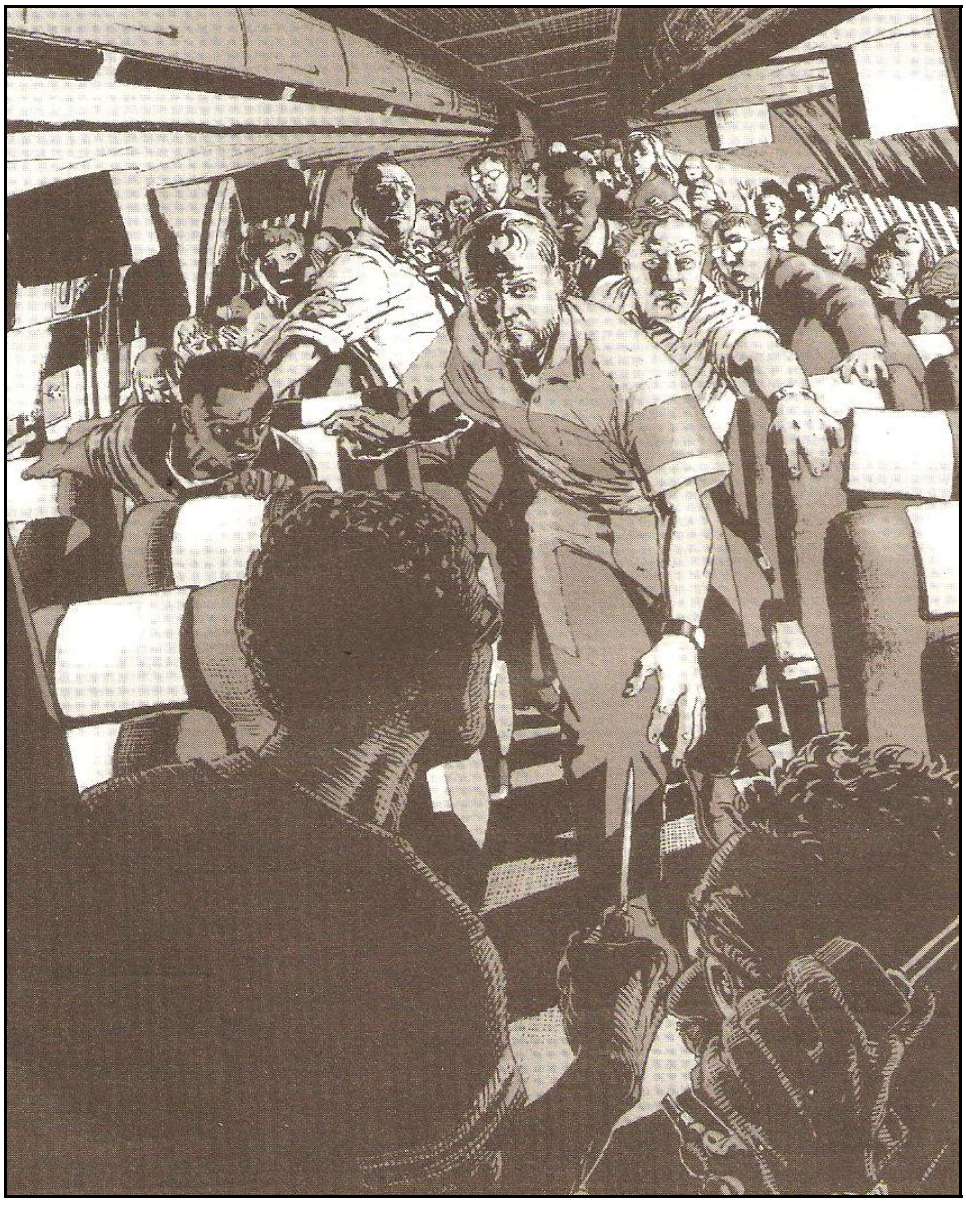

Figure 15.1.

[41] See Chapter Ten for more details on Jenkins's article about how 9/11 comics were among the first fictional works that rewrote the events of 9/11.

Part III "Terrorists in America" analyzed some of those few fictional works in which the 9/11 hijackers appear as fully developed characters and even narrators of the stories presented. However, we also saw how these "pretended" approaches to the 9/11 terrorist minds are in fact abused by their respective authors to display their personal political and "reformist" agendas on the issue of international terrorism. The fictional terrorists therefore, end up being represented as haters, perverts, or fanatics, and it is especially omnipresent in these 9/11 works the shared view that entire Islam is a monolithic religion. Very few works indeed dared to present Islam in another fashion in regards to 9/11. One of these exceptions was the novel *La dernière nuit d´un damné* (2003) by the French Muslim author Slimane Benaïssa. This work, translated into English and published in the US under the title *The Last Night of a Damned Soul* (2004), portrays how an ordinary Muslim is misguided by his Imam into being a suicide bomber. In this respect, it could appear at first sight that it resembles Updike's mainstream novel *Terrorist* (2006).[42] However, both works could not be more different. Firstly, while Updike's novel traces the transformation of a Muslim teenager who hates everything and turns into a good-hearted yet brainwashed boy who gains the sympathy of the reader, Benaïssa's fictional terrorist experiences just the opposite metamorphosis, that is, from being a caring Muslim teenager and good son to be turned into a terrorist. However, the most important difference between both works resides not in the "story" but in the "approach": while Updike's novel is full of stereotypes and prejudices of all colors – including a Gospel singer and oversexed African American teenage girl, a gangsterish African American pimp, and a noble but embittered Jew tutor –, Benaïssa's work distances itself from the rest of 9/11 pieces because of its unprecedented representation in a fictional 9/11 piece of

[42] See Chapter Seven, which is entirely dedicated to the analysis of Updike's 9/11 novel.

the thousands of ways to live as a Muslim nowadays. Indeed, the novel is a direct statement in favor of this multifaceted understanding of Islam, carried out through the different visions of "being a Muslim" conveyed by every character that the protagonist interacts with: his mother, his father, his school friends, his imam, his new and elitist friends… Benaïssa also investigates though his fictional work in other factors besides religion that are fundamental for a more complete comprehension of the phenomenon of terrorism, like economic and social inequalities. In this respect, Benaïssa follows the line opened by Paul Virilio in his analysis of twenty-first century international terrorism as "an elite of rich Muslim students, military men and technicians (pilots, programmers, scientists, etc.)… or straight away Arab (or other) multinationals exploiting the beliefs or hatred of a global subproletariat, a lumpen class produced by decolonization and mass immigration" (Virilio, 2002, p. 66).

Finally, Part IV "Terrorists in "Histoerical" Context" analyzed how the 9/11 events were so mischievously framed into history by US 9/11 fiction – and non-fiction – as the new Pearl Harbor, even the new Holocaust, or the quintessential evidence of Huntington's notorious "Clash of Civilizations" theory. However, there were also very few works which resisted such self-victimizing and propagandistic mainstream tendencies and portrayed the history of the conflict and the terrorists in a different fashion. This is the case of the docudrama *The Hamburg Cell* (2004) directed by the British Antonia Bird and coproduced by Channel 4 in the UK and CBC in Canada. Drawing on two years of extensive research, it re-creates the history of the 9/11 attacks, that is, how they were planned, how the hijackers were recruited, and finally how the attacks were executed. The interesting aspect of this work is that, following the perspective of one of the hijackers involved, Ziad Jarrah, it does not only portray the plotting of the attacks by the cell but it also focuses on the personal

stories behind that, especially the love relationship between Jarrah and his Turkish girlfriend and later wife Aysel Senguen. In fact, the docudrama recreates situations that humanize the hijackers and which very few other 9/11 fictional pieces have paid attention to for ideological and demonizing reasons, for instance, the phone call that Jarrah made from the airport to his wife in Hamburg to say simply "I love you" three times before boarding United 93 flight, a call whose veracity is verified by the 9/11 Commission Report.[43]

Coincidentally – or not –, the creators of these three works referred above which are so much "against the grain," I mean Kordey, Benaïssa, and Bird, are not Americans, although their works were published/distributed in the US. It is a fact – not exempt from logic – that non-American authors were less guided by blindly patriotic interests in their re-writing of the 9/11 events. One of the most interesting 9/11 fictional works due to its varied approach to the event is precisely the film *11'09''01 – September 11* (2002), which consists of eleven short films of 11minutes and nine second each one, and directed by eleven different directors from around the world.

It must also be recognized within the corpus of 9/11 fiction some self-critical response yet minimal on the part of American authors especially in regards to the way the attacks were abused by the US media and by President George W. Bush in his post-9/11 public addresses to the nation. Two works are noteworthy in this respect: Lynne Sharon Swartz's novel *The Writing on the Wall* (2005), starred by a New York librarian and linguist whose hobby of collecting examples of misused language from newspapers and sticking them on the walls of her house considerably increases after 9/11 to the point of madness – paradoxically, not without reason –; and Alan Moore's

[43] The other fictional work that includes this call is Paul Greengrass's film *United 93*, which was analyzed in depth in Chapter Four.

comic “This is Information” (Richardson, 2002, p. 185-90), which critically approaches President Bush’s notorious and reductionist black-or-white fallacy of “either you are with us or you are with the terrorists” (Bush, 2001, p. 1140-44), and how the media helped to overspread it.

Finally, there is a reduced group of 9/11 works which, rather than focusing on paying tribute to the victims or extolling the heroes of that day like most 9/11 fictional works did, opted instead to narrate the stories of those other victims of the 9/11 attacks: those Muslims, Arabs, Middle Easterners, and whoever looked like Muslim, Arab, or from the Middle East who was verbally or physically harassed in the streets of the US since September 11, if not systematically racial profiled and strip searched by authority agents. As I already mentioned in the Introduction, Amnesty International confirmed that in the first week after 9/11 at least 540 attacks against Arabs Americans were reported in the US (Amnesty International, 2001, p. 11). Five years later, a Gallup poll taken at July 2006 found that 22% Americans say they would not like to have a Muslim as a neighbor, 34% believe than all Muslims living in the US back Al-Qaeda, and 39% advocate that Muslims in the US should carry special ID (Asad, 2007, p. 97). Most of these forms of anti-Muslim prejudice together with the considerable increase in the number of attacks against Arabs in the US were exercised by people who had read and consumed too much 9/11 media material. Among those few fictional works which represented these post-9/11 hate crimes and misjudgments, there are three works that reached the mainstream market: Mohsin Hamid’s novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007), which narrates how a Pakistani young broker who is fully immersed in achieving the American Dream in New York starts to “reverse” the road after suffering some “social” consequences of the 9/11 attacks; Kenny Glenaan’s film *Yasmin* (2004), in which an also westernized Pakistani

protagonist's life is altered after the 9/11 attacks by both the ostracism she suddenly suffers at work, and the brutal and mistaken internment of her husband under the harsh rules of the Anti-terrorist Act; and thirdly, Claire Tristram's revolutionary novel *After* (2004), in which the president of the 9/11 widows association starts a love and hate affair tainted by sadomasochism with a married Muslim man.

In summary, I have tried to finish this project by giving some voice and some space in this conclusion to those few 9/11 works and authors who dared to confront the general line of re-writing the 9/11 attacks through fiction based on blindly patriotic and racially biased interests. Not only have I referred here these few works "against the flow" in order to open new lines of research for incoming scholars on the topic of 9/11 fiction, but these works give also testimony to the possibility of offering certain resistance to those demonizing and generalizing attitudes that inhabit the vast majority of 9/11 works. As we have seen, when terrorists are mentioned within these works, they are demonized not only because their terrorist acts – which is, up to a point, understandable – but on the grounds of their race, religion and "looks." Such generalization of their racial, religious, and "facial" features, which involves millions of innocent people, is much more reprehensible when considering that it is presented in the guise of fiction. It is history itself which is rewritten under the dictates of this prejudiced fashion. Not only that, but most insidiously, fiction itself misleadingly rewrites the master narratives of history according to previously defined political interests, because ideology is most dangerous when apparently invisible.

Figure vi. Joel Pett, *Lexington Herald-Leader*, 2005.

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